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IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
OF THE YOUNG

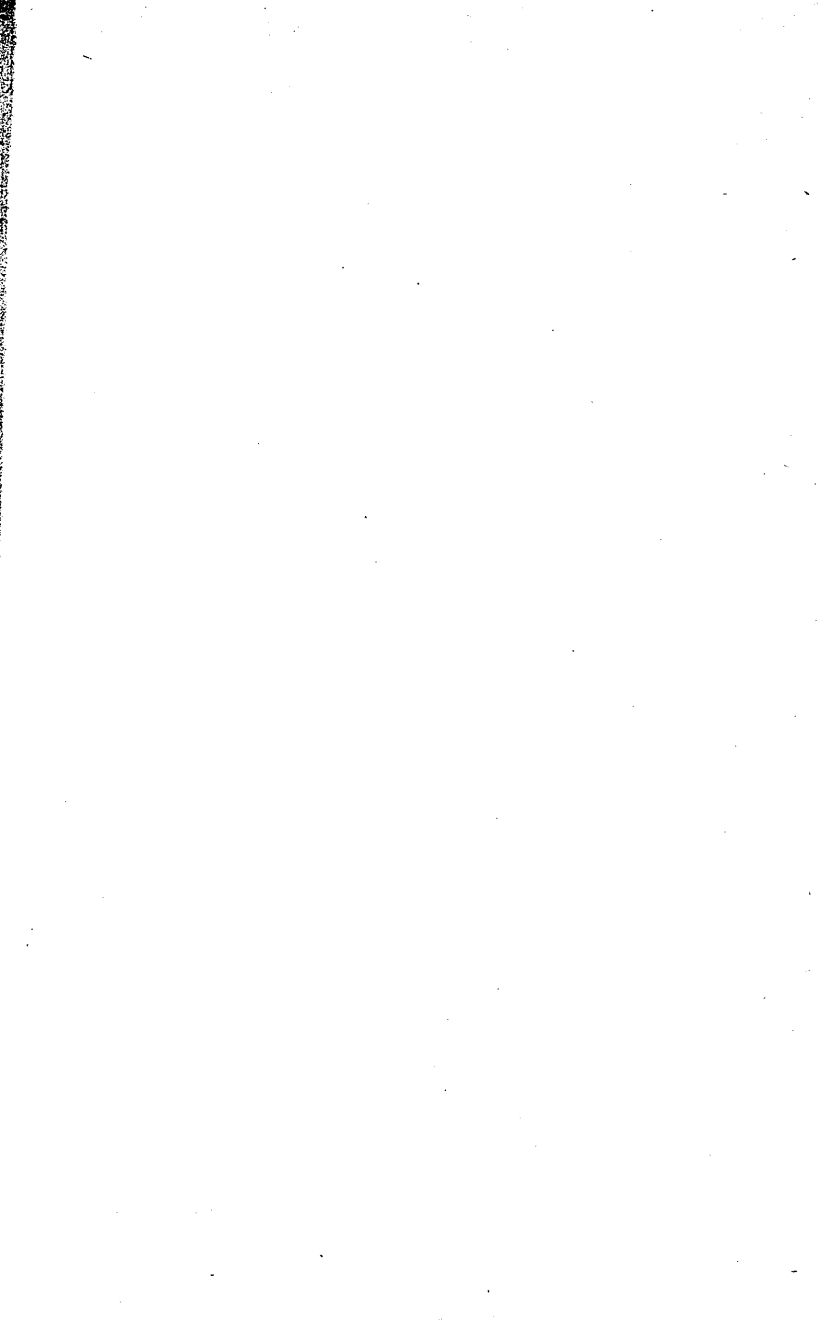
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In the Religious Education
of the Young

By

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PREFACE

In putting together these chapters I have not aimed at producing an exhaustive manual on Sunday School work. It has been my object to explain and commend the great elementary principles that lie behind all educational methods, and to illustrate and apply them in such a way that they would be accepted as vitally important by all who are engaged in the religious education of the young, whether in the Sunday School or in the home. I am of opinion that it is more helpful to teachers to have clear and confirmed ideas about these principles, than that they should be informed on the details of pedagogical method, however important that detailed information may be.

In particular I have been influenced by two convictions regarding religious instruction, which I hope I may commend to my readers. The first is, that the religious education of the young ought chiefly to be an endeavour to inspire Christian ideals, rather than to impart knowledge. My second conviction is that, in this task, theoretical explanation is not enough. The faith to which we are trying to lead the children means more than knowledge; it means more even than belief; and our educational methods are only likely to

achieve the highest results when we recognise this fact, and deliberately aim, not only at imparting information about Christ, but at creating an appreciation of the worth and grandeur of His spirit. If I should be successful in helping any teacher to catch this point of view, I shall regard my labour as being well repaid.

ROBERT CORKEY.

College Park, Belfast.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SOUL OF A CHILD.

I HAVE been greatly interested of late in the development of a little girl, aged one. She has been revealing to me secrets about her soul. My acquaintance with her has given me an opportunity of verifying at first hand theories which hitherto I had entertained on secondhand information only. It will be relevant to our subject, and will not be a betrayal of any household secrets, if I relate an incident in the life-history of this little one.

Attached to all Venetian blinds there is a stop-cord, which is used for adjusting the blind at any height that may be desired. There is usually attached to the end of this cord a little ornamental wooden knob, shaped not unlike a monster beetle. Strange to say, on the very first occasion on which this child caught sight of this innocent ornament, she displayed a most unreasonable antipathy to it. She showed an ineradicable objection to its being in her neighbourhood. When brought near to it she protested most vigorously, with evident signs of

fear. In fact, so persistent was her objection that it was thought prudent in the interests of the child's peace of mind, to remove the offending beetle from the nursery altogether. A little later, when her powers of observation had sufficiently developed to enable her to distinguish between a button and a beetle, the little knob was replaced, and it now caused her no alarm at all.

This is a trifling incident, similar, I have no doubt, to many that a person with any experience of children could recall. If we carefully examine it, however, we shall find that it is capable of throwing a good deal of light on the constitution of the child-nature, which it is the business of the teacher to train.

It is obvious, first of all, that in her agitation, instinct was at work. The child's complex chain of experiences, involving the discrimination of the object as possibly dangerous, the commotion of fear, and the strenuous effort to put her locomotive apparatus in motion, was evidently not of her designing. But it was designed nevertheless. It was an arrangement fixed by nature, calculated to ensure safety, and so geared together that it was always repeated in all its details, when the original occasion recurred. It was an innate disposition to respond in a specific way to a particular object. It was an example of what psychologists call a primary instinct.

Careful observation has disclosed the fact that there are in human nature several such deeply implanted dispositions or instincts, distinguishable from each other by the nature of the objects that

elicit their activity, as well as by the character of the feeling that accompanies their expression. Curiosity, for example, is a recognised disposition of this kind. It is a desire to explore, and it is always accompanied by a feeling of wonder more or less pronounced. Novelties in the way of sensible objects, especially if they are bright and vivid, inevitably arrest the attention of the young, and hold it until the desire to know more about the object is assuaged. Pugnacity is another instinct all too well known to most of us. Any obstruction to any activity on which we are bent is apt to provoke anger, and suggest rather unlawful exhibitions of power. There are many other native impulsive tendencies such as imitation, self-assertion, emulation, acquisitiveness, constructiveness, and the so-called gregarious instinct, all of which are too familiar to require any word of comment. The broad fact of importance is that we come into the world with definite tendencies to feel and act in specific ways towards particular objects. These instincts may come into prominence at different stages in the development of a child, but we must believe that the tendency has been there from the first. They make up, in part at any rate, the constitution of human nature. No tuition is necessary to their display.

But a second conclusion we may draw from the example with which we began. These instincts by themselves provide very imperfect guidance for human life. In the case of the lower creatures, native wisdom is much more serviceable for the practical ends of their existence. The swallows

at the approach of winter, guided by the strange impulses of their being, make their wonderful flight to the lands of the south. Instinct to them is a sure and sufficient guide. The life-habits of ants and bees offer still more marvellous illustrations of the definiteness and adequacy of the instinctive wisdom of the animal world. But human beings come into the world with no such unerring impulses. Their instincts are vague, and often misleading. In the case we are considering, the child was totally misguided. If the button had actually been a venomous beetle there would have been some reason for all the commotion. But as the offensive object was only a harmless wooden knob, the fear was foolish, and gave rise only to trouble and unnecessary inconvenience.

A third fact, however, we may gather from the incident, and one of more importance still for our purpose. It is evident that these dispositions are modifiable. If they cannot be eradicated they can be changed. If I had followed my purely scientific, rather than my parental proclivities, I might have created several fear "sentiments" out of this disposition. For example, if I had experimented with the instinct every time I went into the room I would very quickly have brought about a very disagreeable result indeed. The child would soon have begun to associate me with the object of her fear, and would have come rapidly to detest me as heartily as the object itself. A well deserved sentiment of aversion would have taken the place of a proper deference and respect! Happily wiser counsels prevailed. The objection-

able little fixture was removed altogether, until sufficient intelligence had arrived to enable the child to recognise it as perfectly harmless, and even to laugh at her own earlier fears.

Our examination of this item of nursery news has opened up a vast subject of inquiry. Let me at once put teachers at their ease in regard to it. It is not essential, for efficient teaching, to be versed in all these curious psychological facts. It is not essential to be able to name all these innate dispositions, and trace their development until they reappear in the binary and trinary sentiments of the mature adult. But it does seem to me desirable that teachers should have a broad and accurate conception of the character of a child's mind. He should understand that a child's acts are largely impulsive, and that their character and direction depend largely upon the sentiments that have been allowed to grow up out of its original instinctive nature. Every teacher may take it for granted that the members of his class have, as the result of their experience, already adopted definite attitudes to all the objects that make up their world. His parents, his neighbours, teachers, the world of nature, the animal world, duty, recreation, the Church and God, all these, we may be sure, excite in the mind of the boy feelings of fear or respect, admiration, delight or love, according to the nature of the experience he has had of them. These feelings, or rather the habitual tendency to have them, are his sentiments. They do for him in a far more thorough way, what instinct did for the child. They largely

determine how he will act. They constitute his nature so far as it has been already formed.

Further, following the hint given to us in our analysis of instinctive fear, it is all-important that teachers should realise that none of these sentiments is permanently fixed. Their permanency is only relative. Like instinct, they can be modified. The chief task of the Sunday School teacher, in fact, just consists in transforming these, so far as they are unwise, and in strengthening them in so far as they are in accordance with the feelings of a healthy Christian mind. We could not indeed more accurately describe the highest of the ends at which he aims, than by saying that he tries to bring the sentiments of the child into harmony with the sentiments of Jesus Christ.

It has been said that it is a delicate matter to meddle with souls. The truth of the statement need not be denied, but it is a task that cannot be refused. The world is meddling with the souls of children all the time, and not always with the best intent. Christian people, to whom has been given the perfect pattern of life in Christ Jesus, cannot shirk the responsibility of bringing that Life to bear on the minds of the young that they may be transformed into that same likeness. How the lesson may be turned to account for that end will later appear.

CHAPTER II.

FROM IMPULSE TO IDEAL.

IT has been said that all action is reaction. The behaviour of the living organism is a response to the circumstances of the moment.

I was present the other day at a little flower show, and by some sport of fortune I was asked to act as one of the judges. I had to adjudicate on a display of hyacinths. I had no special knowledge of hyacinthine excellence, but in running my eye over the blooms I had no difficulty in observing that some of them were plainly defective. They were sadly bent. It is a habit hyacinths have. If they are grown indoors it is almost impossible to keep them straight for a single day. They grow of course towards the light. If you turn them round you will find that before long they will have swung back again so as to face the light as before. The sunshine floats in, and acts on the sensitive nature of the plant, which, by a mysterious instinct of its own, reacts to the appeal. Its action is really reaction. It is a purposeful response to the stimulus of light.

It is interesting to observe that this humble act is analogous to much of the behaviour of men. Their action is often little more than reaction to some circumstance that has made an insistent appeal. Picture to yourself a man dreaming over the fire on a Saturday afternoon, in an absent-minded indolent mood. Suddenly he realises that the sun is streaming in at the window, and we can imagine him saying to himself, "I should be out on such an afternoon," and he puts on his hat and coat and out he goes, making his response to the appeal the sunshine as naturally and innocently as the flowers. To confirm our opinion on this point let us follow him a little, for he is just in the mood to be the easy victim of the winds of chance. Presently a fire-engine dashes round the corner, with a roar and a clang, a pack of boys in hot pursuit, and our friend being at a loose end, naturally starts off after the boys, his cerebral mechanism responding to the new appeal. Before he has gone far he runs up against an acquaintance, and in response to his invitation he starts off for a tramp over the neighbouring hills, until the pangs of hunger make a fresh appeal, and he turns his steps again towards home. His line of action during the whole afternoon may fairly be said to have been determined by appeals from without. His action was reaction.

Alert readers by this time will probably be bursting to remind me that this is not a full statement of the case. It is only occasionally, in our off-moments, that our conduct is of this casual, automatic character. Our course is, as a rule, directed

not merely by circumstances without us, but by purposes within us. Amid the business and bustle of practical affairs, the ruling influence in a man's life is always some unseen purpose, some fixed resolve that authoritatively governs the appeal of distractions by the way. If our absent-minded friend had had serious business on hand that afternoon, if for example he had determined to catch the three o'clock train to spend the week-end with a friend, I imagine that not even the clanging of a fire-engine would have diverted him from his path. It might have compelled him to glance round, but it would not have altered the direction of his steps. His fixed purpose, his dominant desire, would have asserted itself, and imperiously whispered, "Move on."

At this point we have no difficulty in seeing the importance and power of worthy ambitions in a man's life. They play the part of guardians to his soul. They fortify him against the lure of numberless siren voices, to which a drifting soul would be all too willing to give heed. They are like "rectifiers" in wireless; they strain out irrelevant influences that would distract us, and make a consistent, creditable career possible.

A couple of illustrations will make this clear. Robert Redding, the hero of Alice Regan's "Cabbage Patch," was, one afternoon, much amused, and not a little impressed, by discovering that he was regarded by a little acquaintance of his as a paragon of all excellence and virtue. It was a new experience, and it was to have strange consequences. Going home that night to his lonely apartments,

he was strangely arrested by the strains of boisterous music, and revelry. "For a moment he stood irresolute. 'There is certainly nobody to care where I go,' he thought gloomily; then suddenly his smile came back, 'If I am to be Billy's hero I guess I'd better go home.' " A new purpose had been born within him, and already its influence was felt. He had now to be a model to his friend, and all that was not in keeping with that, had to be ruled out. His heart may still have hankered somewhat after the music, but he turned his steps towards home.

The other illustration I take from the biography of Jenny Lind, the famous Prima-donna, who was beloved by all who knew her for the simple goodness and devoted piety that always characterised her life. It is recorded of her that, towards the end of her life, as she lay seriously ill, she was heard to observe, partly to her nurse and partly to herself, "I have always tried to put God first. Even when I was a child I always tried to put God first." What a hallowing, ennobling desire to have in the place of authority all through one's life! It would be impossible to imagine the number of instances in which that desire checked hasty impulses, and transmuted selfish inclinations into noble deeds.

In the light of this truth it is obvious that a teacher can do a child no greater service than to implant in his soul worthy ambitions and desires. In that way he mans the citadel of the soul with allies of the Kingdom of God. But how is this to be done? That most important question still

awaits an answer. How are we to establish in the child's heart those dominant desires that we believe to be in accordance with the mind of Christ? The task is not so intricate as one might at first suppose. Without attempting to explain the alchemy of all the processes of the soul, it is possible to put the whole matter in a very simple way. High purposes are the by-product in a man's soul of the character he admires. It is sentiments that rule the will. "Show me the man you honour," says Carlyle, "I know by that symptom better than by any other what kind of man you long inexpressibly to be." We cannot, by any mere abstract exhortations to be good, affect the deep and secret purposes that weigh with a youth, as he shapes his conduct from day to day; but we can inspire his soul with examples of manhood that will secretly and unceasingly purify his motives and determine his choice. We cannot manipulate his will by either force or command, but we can intensify his admiration for courage, honour, reverence, and faith, in whomsoever he may find them. From admiration to imitation is but a step.

The mind of man may be compared to a central exchange office in a wide telephone system. Impressions are continually being received from the environment through the senses, and every impression makes its own characteristic appeal. For every message received by the mind in terms of impression, a message is sent out in terms of will. Every suggestion, be it good or ill, gets its reply. But the quality of the acts in which a man replies depends ultimately on the worth of the character

he most admires. The moral complexion of his life depends on whom he has established as an authority at the centre of his soul.

It is only necessary to add that the elements of this ideal character must be found in the moral instruction we give. It is obvious that if we are to reach the will, we must continually discover in our lessons, heroes of faith, champions of righteousness, creators of happiness and love, and other knights of the Holy Ghost. For these we must enthusiastically claim the approval and admiration of the class. We shall find in the lessons other things besides. But these pictures of holiness, these images of faith in action, these gleams of the spirit of Christ, these varying facets of the righteousness of God, constitute just the material that a wise teacher will be most anxious to discern. If he can make these impressive, his work cannot altogether be in vain.

CHAPTER III.

THE LESSON.

PROTESTANTS have always placed great reliance upon the Word of God as a means of grace. The reformers had the conviction that their work could only be established by giving to the people the Scriptures in their own tongue. One of the first English translators of the Bible was William Tyndale, whose edition was published in 1520, about a century before the Authorised Version was given to the world. Tyndale explains the motive that animated him in his great work in these words, "I had perceived by experience how it is impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the order, process, and meaning of the text; for else whatever truth is taught them, these enemies of all truth quench it again."

That reliance upon the Word of God is a sound conviction that is with us still. At the beginning of the war every soldier from Ulster was presented with a New Testament, and on the fly leaf of each

copy there was a brief message from Lord Roberts, which is of special interest as a fine expression of abiding faith in the power of the Word of God. He wrote, "When in any doubt, difficulty or anxiety, pray to God and read this little book. God will strengthen you, He will uphold you. Your path will be made straight, and God will help you to see clearly what to do."

The question we have to consider is, how shall we use this storehouse of spiritual knowledge for the religious education of the young? We shall be guided perhaps to right methods if we first of all set out clearly before our minds what it is that we have in the Bible. The right use of Scripture depends on a knowledge of what Scripture is.

There are two great facts in regard to the Bible, that are universally taken for granted to-day by all who have thought deeply upon the subject. First of all it is recognised that we have in the Bible the record of a long process of revelation in which there was gradually disclosed to men the character and the will of God. It is impossible to state with precise accuracy the length of the period of history covered by the Old Testament, during which the Old Testament itself was in process of construction; but we shall not be far wrong if we assume that this half of the Bible was written at intervals during a period of 800 or 1,000 years. This fact itself, imaginatively understood, will help us rightly to interpret the book. Picture to yourself a book that had gradually been put together during the last 1,000 years of our own national history. What a wonderful compilation it would

be! What an evolution of thought it would reveal! What a tremendous expansion of knowledge it would disclose in geography, astronomy, zoology, and physical science, from the days of the Norman Conquest till our own time! It would be obvious to all who perused such a book, that more light gradually dawned upon men through the whole period, as they laboured to decipher the book of nature that lay before them.

The Bible is an analogous record of a gradually increasing knowledge of God. The earlier religious ideas were not so full or satisfactory as the truth that was later revealed. In the earlier periods, for example, it was believed that by the sacrifice of bulls and of goats men could make complete atonement for sin. There was in that idea the shadow of a great truth, but we realise to-day that the truth was only partially expressed. Men, again, thought at first of God as an Omnipotent Law-giver, who arbitrarily enunciated His will, and cared only for the sanctity of His law. In that conception too there was a partial truth, but it was not completely satisfactory or final. The fuller truth came slowly to light as men were able to apprehend it. That is the first fact to be frankly recognised by all who would make a wise use of Scripture in the education of the young.

The second fact is, that we have the key to the whole revelation in the final disclosure recorded in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. As He is the crown of Scripture, He is necessarily the criterion of all that went before. Those who are familiar with the devices of warfare will know what

“ cipher ” is. It is a secret system of writing, an arrangement of signs whereby a message can be sent that will be intelligible only to those who have the key. Now the Bible, to a reader of the twentieth century, is, in many of its earlier portions, a writing in cipher. The characters are often a perplexing blend of what is noble and what is base. Glorious truth is sometimes found side by side with what seems very like miserable, weary pessimism. A Psalm of nerve-shaking imprecations will be followed by a beautiful and exalted image of the Ideal King.

All this is apt to be very perplexing until we recognise that Christ is not only the culmination of revelation, but the criterion of it all. Apply His measure to the Word, and its message throughout becomes clear. Some portions are dwarfed to insignificance; other portions are felt to be eternally true. He is the interpreter. The meekness of Moses, the obedience of Samuel, the courage of Gideon, the fervour of Elijah, the faith of Isaiah, and every fragment of the contents of Scripture in keeping with His spirit, comes home to us with inspiring and authoritative messages still. In a word, we have in the Bible a wonderful picture-gallery of the pioneers of faith. Judged in the light of their time, these were men of unique spiritual insight and power. There were anticipations of the final truth in all of them, but it is in the life and spirit of Christ that we find that truth itself. The Bible finds its interpretation in Him.

We are now in a better position to give a satisfactory answer to our original question, how shall

we use this wonderful record for the religious education of the child?

The effective use of Scripture involves a two-fold task. First, there must be a careful selection of the portions used. All Scripture is profitable, but we have no reason to believe that it is all profitable for the religious training of the young. A selection must be made, and in drawing up a system of lessons we need have no hesitation in omitting passages that have merely an historic interest, as well as those that obviously contain religious ideas that are incongruous with the spirit of Christ.

This work of selection, however, is usually done for us. Most teachers at the beginning of the year have a system of lessons put into their hands. The other great task, on the other hand, is one that confronts us week by week. This task also involves selection, but selection from the material of the lesson itself of the ideas that are most useful for our purpose. We might describe this task as that of interpretation or of "emphasis." Interpretation is nearly always simply a question of emphasis. If I am given a sentence to read, I interpret it correctly if I know where to place the emphasis. It is possible for me to read nine different meanings into the ninth commandment, according as I stress one or other of the nine words that compose it. To get the proper sense the emphasis must be correct. A musician, when given a piece of music to play, interprets it correctly by a discerning use of emphasis. He has got to observe the expression marks, and use the loud and

soft pedal as the theme demands. An historian gives us an intelligent view of history by a correct placing of the emphasis. Many of the events he has to record are of no significance, and he passes them by with scant attention. Others are fraught with vast consequences, and he sets them in the foreground, enlarges upon them, and so enables us to get a conception of the trend of events in their true perspective. And the exposition of Scripture is almost invariably simply a matter of emphasis. We have to take the passage given to us, analyse it, select the ideas that are of practical importance, and so exalt, expand, and illuminate them, that they may enlighten the mind and impress the heart.

The necessity for this process of selection will be evident if we take an example. The story of the call of Samuel (I. Samuel iii.) is one that every teacher at some time or another has to handle. In turning the passage over in his mind he will discover that there are a considerable number of points of interest that invite his attention. There is, for example, the place—"The Temple of the Lord." That is a subject about which, he naturally thinks, children should have some information. The phrase, "open vision," suggests revelation, and calls up to his mind all the ways, past and present, in which God has communicated with His people. The obedience of Samuel opens up another, and very practical line of thought. Then there is the character of Eli, and the shame of his degenerate sons, subjects that lead on by easy lines of association to the certainty of judgment upon sin.

These and many other ideas directly suggested by the facts of the story will crowd upon his mind. But it is obvious that they are not all of equal importance. We have to select for emphasis the ideas that are most calculated to incline the children to a Christian life. Some elements in the lesson will be peculiarly appropriate for one class, other elements will be suitable for another. In the senior classes, the great truths of our faith, as they crop up in the lesson from time to time will demand some explanation. But I hope to show that for the great mass of children in our Sunday Schools it is the practical examples of Christian life that are of most vital importance. It is through the ideals in the lesson that we can most effectively preach Christ to the child mind.

CHAPTER IV.

IMPRESSING THE HEART.

I HAVE suggested that the points of interest in a lesson are of two kinds. There are the facts of the lesson, and there are the ideals suggested by it. By "facts" I mean truths that are to be explained to the understanding and impressed upon the memory. By "ideals" I mean examples of Christian conduct that are to be impressed upon the heart. It will be convenient, and not misleading, if I use this word to cover not only particular acts, but also the deeper Christian dispositions of character from which these acts spring. We will postpone for the moment any consideration of the facts of the lesson, and will try to understand how we are to deal with its ideals.

Benjamin Kidd, in his book, "The Science of Power," makes frequent use of that very suggestive phrase, "the emotion of the ideal." "Civilisation," he says, "has its origin, has its existence, and has the cause of its progress in the emotion of the ideal." There is an extraordinary

amount of truth in this statement. The contribution that a man makes to the welfare of the world depends far more upon his sympathies, than upon his knowledge, and in particular upon the intensity of his sympathy with ideals.

An illustration will not be out of place. One of the most thrilling and romantic stories of modern history is that of Garibaldi, the Italian patriot. His life is a series of most daring exploits. Everyone has heard of his wonderful expedition with his thousand volunteers through Sicily and Calabria, when city after city opened its gates to the victorious army whose unparalleled loyalty and heroism laid the foundation of a free and united Italy. The story is of peculiar interest to us because, as we read it, the fact becomes clear that the most influential force in his life was just the dream of a regenerated Italy that had captivated his imagination in his early days. His inspiration was his ideal. Speaking of his first visit to Rome, he says, "The Rome I beheld with my youthful imagination was the Rome of the future; the Rome that I, though shipwrecked, banished, dying, have never despaired of, the regenerating ideal of a great nation, the dominant thought and inspiration of my whole life. I worshipped with the fervour of a lover the merest fragment of her ruins. This love I hid away as a secret treasure in the depth of my heart. It was a passion which so far from diminishing, strengthened with distance and exile." And later in life, when lying at Caprera sorely wounded, his thigh being pierced and his ankle being broken

by the bullets, he wrote: "I have in my heart an Italy, the thought of which rends me, hurts me more than the bullet, more than the broken bone." Beyond doubt the emotion of his ideal was an important factor in his mental make-up.

One could multiply similar illustrations to corroborate the truth that it is sympathy with ideals that counts most. If a man's heart is in league with his head, if his feelings rejoice in what his conscience approves, he may be counted on to be a warm advocate of all that he knows to be right. It is not a bare acquaintance with Christianity that makes us active for the Kingdom of God, it is the degree of enthusiasm with which we endorse the ideal of Christ. The most potent forces for good in our being are those dreams of excellence that have, as Professor James puts it, become hot, alive, and central in our thoughts. The progress of the Kingdom of God depends on the emotion of the Ideal in the hearts of Christian people.

The bearing of this fact on the problem of religious education is fairly obvious. In every lesson there are examples of Christian conduct, which, by skilful teaching, are capable of being implanted as ideals in the hearts of the boys and girls. In one lesson it may be an act of sacrifice; in another, a cry of prayer; in a third, an example of generosity or mercy. In every passage there are these personal incidents, these revelations of character, and the teacher who can take such facts of Scripture, and reveal their inner significance until they become fascinating, is doing the noblest

kind of expository work that a man can be called upon to undertake. He is calling into view the hidden things, the faith and heroism that are not always apparent at first sight, and he is setting them in their true light that they may inspire others. This is, in my opinion, the work to which the teacher is pre-eminently called.

An illustration may better help us to realise the character and importance of this task. Think for a moment of the story of the call of Moses. He is in the wilderness, in charge of the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro; but his thoughts are far away. He cannot get rid of the tragedy that has befallen his kinsmen in Egypt. One never-to-be-forgotten evening a wonderful thing happened; a strange phenomenon caught his eye; a bush burned, but was not consumed. And as he gazed at it, a voice said to him, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." There are doubtless many things in the lesson that will call for notice as a teacher puts it before his class, but the feature of the story of greatest practical importance is that picture of Moses, amid the silence of the wilderness, in an attitude of reverence, at the very moment when he is being given the commission of his great life work. That picture is an example of what I mean by the ideals of the lesson. It is that which ought to become the teacher's main theme. He will try to hold it up before his class in such a way that they will appreciate it, recognise its grandeur, and admire the man who is capable of such feelings before holy things.

How is this to be done? How is the inner significance of such an act to be exhibited? How is its real worth to be disclosed?

First of all, teachers in handling an ideal would do well to make a large use of imagination. They should endeavour to envisage the situation for themselves in all the fullness of its details. The sacred writers were, as a rule, very sparing of words. Their pictures are often given in the barest outline. Now a teacher will very much help children to appreciate a fine deed if, with the aid of imagination, he presents the story to them in his own way, putting in the probable background in all its original colour and detail. Dr. J. H. Jowett, in his book, "The Preacher, his Life and Work," has an interesting passage on this subject, from which I take a few sentences. The suggestion he makes is just as appropriate to the work of teaching as to that of preaching. "I am urging," he says, "the cultivation of the historical imagination, because I am persuaded that the want of it so often gives unreality to our preaching. If we do not realise the past we cannot get its vital message for the present. The past, which is unfolded in the pages of Scripture is to many of us very wooden. And the men and women are wooden; we do not hear them cry; we do not hear them laugh; we do not mix with their humanness, and find that they are just like folk in the next street. And so the message is not alive. Cultivate the latent power of realisation, the power to fill with breath the motionless forms of the past."

A second method of great service in commending an ideal is that of Illustration. As this subject is to occupy our attention at a later stage a word only need be said about it now. It is sufficient to point out that illustrations are used for various purposes, and that an illustration that we use for the purpose of eliciting approval of an act, is simply a parallel incident which we bring along, and set beside the story that we are telling. We count on the first picture making some impression, and we then bring forward another of the same type so that the impression may be deepened.

To revert to our former illustration, we tell the story of Moses at the burning bush for the purpose of inculcating reverence. To some extent the picture will make its own appeal. If we have had any success in explaining the situation, the children may feel that Moses' attitude was the only one which any reasonable being at that moment could assume. As reverence, however, is not a particularly common or popular attitude of soul, we may feel as we proceed that some members of the class have only the smallest idea of what the word means, and have very little conception of the fitness of such a frame of mind in any circumstances whatever. We then use another illustration; we show them the same thing in different circumstances; we recall the story of Thomas before Christ as he cries out, "My Lord and my God"; or we describe the feelings of a benighted traveller, as he stands wrapped in thought, under the starry dome of heaven, his

whole soul moved by the mystery and majesty of it all.

It is by such a procedure that we enable children to feel reverence, and so to understand it. Only thus can we bring them to realise that there are times when a humbling of the heart becomes us. We cannot explain reverence, but by imagination and illustration we can help others to an experimental knowledge of it for themselves.

This leads me to my third suggestion. It is essential in commending an example to others that we should ourselves be in sympathy with the feelings that the incident suggests. The necessity for this will be more apparent, if we remind ourselves that a worthy example is always the act of a man who has been stirred, sometimes to the very depths of his soul, by the facts of life. The reverence of the man of God did not consist simply in the cool removal of his shoes. His heart was bowed in profound feeling. He was inwardly moved by the voice that came to him. Now it is inevitable, if we would sympathetically present such an incident to others, that we ourselves should betray in our looks and tones some trace of the very feeling we are trying to describe. Feelings are extraordinarily contagious. We cannot describe with any fulness an event in which emotions were aroused without our language being coloured to some degree by sympathy. The price paid for a cool aloofness in descriptive work is a suspicion of unreality.

The conclusion I draw from this truth is that there can be no religious instruction where teach-

ing is given in a cold, passionless, purely scientific spirit. There may be education, but it is not religious; it is not even moral. We cannot commend an ideal unless we are prepared to allow ourselves to some extent to be carried away by it. There should be no emotionalism; no pronounced or extravagant display of feeling; no parade of emotion for emotion's sake. But if we are frank and natural, our whole tone and bearing will reflect the character of our subject. We can inspire no admiration for heroism unless we in some degree vibrate to the idea ourselves. We can make no appeal for compassion if it is obvious that the subject leaves us cold. We can infuse no mirth unless we are merry. We can create no faith unless we believe. It is this great fact that lends truth to the common idea that religion is more often caught than taught. It is also the explanation of the notorious fact that a man's influence is often more the result of his character than of his words.

In teaching a single lesson a man may reflect a dozen different moods; but in each case the mood will justly reflect the subject that for the moment happens to occupy his thought. I can imagine few qualities that are more attractive in a teacher, than just this sensitiveness of spirit, which enables him to catch the tone appropriate to the theme. It is the secret of naturalness in all forms of discourse. Apathy, on the other hand, cannot but misrepresent the truth.

A fourth method that can sometimes be brought into service in urging an ideal is to sug-

gest consequences. An act is never an isolated event, complete in itself, all compact within the moment in which it is done. It has consequences, some of which will not be fully consummated till the last syllable of recorded time. The more immediate results, however, are usually obvious enough, and we do not understand an act until we see it in the light of its developments. Deeds, like men, are known by their fruit. We know more of the worth of the faithfulness of Stephen when we call up to our imagination all that his heroism meant for the early Church, for a young man called Saul, and for Stephen himself, to whom the heavens were opened that he might see his Master, and pass to Him without shame or remorse. We know more about the lives of the sons of Eli, when we reflect on the harvest that followed their deeds, a sad harvest for them, for their aged father, and for all Israel. Often, as in the cases I have mentioned, we may be able to gather up from the narrative of Scripture itself some of the results of the events described. Often, however, teachers will have to depend on their general knowledge of the working out of moral and spiritual principles. And it is surely no extravagant use of imagination to forecast the character of the harvest from the seed that is sown.

Finally, in dealing with ideals there is the application of the lesson. This is just another method by which we attempt to secure the imitation of the example in practical life. The "lesson" we apply is not the passage of Scripture itself but the example that we find in the passage,

and we "apply" it just by suggesting to the children occasions in their lives when they may do likewise. Imitation will be more frequent if they see when it may be tried. In junior classes this prompting of the will is peculiarly important on account of the inability of young children to reason for themselves. They may be quite fascinated by an ideal, and yet never see how or when it might become a practical ideal for them. They are not sophisticated enough to apply it even to their neighbours. If we wish to bring the lesson to bear on them at all we must be very direct and very simple. In senior classes, however, these very practical suggestions had better be severely curtailed. Young men and women can usually see the practical implications all too well, and any pointed "improving of the occasion" may seem to them like rubbing it in.

Teachers can never afford to lose sight of the fact that their work is in the strictest sense of the word Evangelical. Its ultimate aim is to bring young people to a recognition of Jesus Christ as their Lord and their God. The inculcation of morals and the implanting of ideals are all undertaken as means to that end. The ideals that we find in Scripture are not man-made conventions, that we impose on the minds of children simply to make them respectable, law-abiding citizens. They are divinely appointed forms of life; details of a pattern conceived in heaven, and intended for our imitation on earth. They are fragments of the garment of the righteousness of Christ, the only adornment that will pass muster in the world

to come. They are features of the character of that new man "which is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Appeals for Christian conduct, and appeals for loyalty to Christ should therefore not be kept widely apart. Every ideal should be urged in the name of Christ, and as the will of Christ. And submission to Him, on the other hand, should be interpreted as just a willingness to adopt His plans so far as they are known. Christ is in some measure revealed in every ideal, and the full ideal is in Him. In making the Christian ideal grand and attractive to children they are calling them to Christ. Perhaps the most devastating heresy of the Sunday School in the past has been the idea that young people could be made Christians by a mere knowledge of the facts of Scripture. The heresy next in importance to that has been the notion that they could be transformed by an acquaintance with the main principles of a theological system that had very little obvious connection with the lives of ordinary people. The faith to which we wish to lead the children is a recognition of the living Christ as the Lord of all, and an acceptance of His righteousness as the rule of their lives.

Different methods of commending this faith are demanded in dealing with different people. In the case of children no method is so likely to result in Christian character as that which aims at winning admiration for the ideals of Christian life. One of the finest tributes I ever heard paid to any person was paid to a lady who had given her

life to Sunday School work. It was, alas, an epitaph, inscribed all too soon. It consisted of just four words, "She made goodness beautiful." That is the greatest achievement a teacher can hope or pray for.

CHAPTER V.

INSPIRING BELIEF.

WE think to act. When our progress has been obstructed along any line of action, we sit down and begin to think. We put on our consideration cap and ask ourselves what we shall do next. Our reflection is a preparation for action. A skilled pianist, performing a piece of music with which he is familiar, does not need to bestow upon the operation any great amount of thought. Most of his movements are semi-automatic. His fingers seem to go, like a subtle piece of mechanism, of their own accord, and his imagination, as he plays, may even be tempted to wander off to quite other subjects. But suppose that suddenly in the midst of the performance a key refuses to respond. He is immediately upset; he can't get on with the execution of his piece. All his wandering faculties of thought are at once brought to attention. He has got to discover what is wrong, and set it right, that he may be able to bring out the full harmonies as before. He thinks to act.

The same principle holds true in the more serious business of life. No important operation can be carried through in a semi-automatic fashion; circumstances are too perplexing for that. Men are continually being confronted with obstacles that threaten to impede progress, and which, for that very reason, demand attention. A manufacturer loses a manager, for example, and the work of a whole department is held up. His arrangements for the moment are dislocated. He fears that he may not be able to fulfil his contracts. At once his whole attention is focussed on the situation, and he can hardly dismiss it from his mind until it has been satisfactorily adjusted. He thinks that he may act. Most of the thought that a man gives to the practical problems of life are efforts to reduce the difficulties that threaten to baffle and impede him in his purpose to realise the deep desires of his heart. He thinks to act.

This truth suggests a further important principle. It will hardly be questioned that men in the practical exigencies of life are only likely to act wisely when they think aright. The solution of a problem is only likely to be accurate when worked out in the light of the facts. The difficulty is only likely to be happily surmounted when it is met with a full knowledge of the relevant circumstances of the case. A wrong opinion can too easily betray a man into an unwise deed. The employer, who is considering applicants to fill the vacant situation, feels that it is all important that he should get at the truth. He cannot afford to follow first impressions. He keeps all his critical faculties awake.

Even testimonials, he thinks, are not to be taken at their face value, and as he cons them over, he reads chiefly between the lines. He realises that the wisdom of his choice will depend on his being able to discover the truth. We may take it as a sound principle that men are more likely to act aright when they think aright.

Now this principle, which we have found applicable in our practical affairs, points very directly to the importance of a knowledge of the real issues that are involved in this life of ours. To a very considerable extent a man's conduct is determined by what he believes about the world, about himself, and about God. The opinions that a man holds about these things are often the unrecognised arbiters of his destiny. They help to decide his choice in the great crises of his life. We shall not read far in the biography of any man before we come upon incidents where his policy was determined by his principles, or as we should say, by his beliefs.

At a crisis in the American civil war, when it was suggested that the government should issue a Declaration of Emancipation, General Garfield was asked if he thought it would be safe to emancipate the slaves. His reply was very characteristic. "It is always safe," he said, "to do what is right. It is never safe to do what is wrong." His words express one of his beliefs about the nature of the world in which we live. That was part of the reliable information that had been imparted to him by his teachers, and that had, no doubt, been corroborated in his own experience. It was a valuable

belief; he was more likely to act wisely in the highest sense because of his possessing that piece of correct information.

Mr. Gladstone, once speaking to young men, gave them this counsel: "Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling, not a mean and grovelling thing that we are to shuffle through as we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny." That was one of his beliefs. It was a portion of his creed. It was a valuable belief too, and a man holding that conviction will be more likely to act in a brave and Christian spirit amid the hardships of life, than if he were depressed by a gloomy and pessimistic outlook. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. It was said of Henry Drummond that he believed with his whole heart that men could find power in Christ to change their lives. There again you have an example of a true belief, and in the life of Drummond you have an example of the power that such a belief can exercise over a man's life. His Christian activities were extraordinary both in their wisdom and power, for they were undertaken in the clear light of the highest Christian truth. The statement will hardly be controverted that a man is not likely to live as a Christian at all unless he has got hold of some Christian truth. It is time however to show the bearing of this fact on the work of the teacher.

In a previous chapter I insisted on the view that the chief business of the Sunday School teacher was to take the ideals of Christian conduct that he found in the lesson, and impress them upon the hearts of the children. I have no wish to alter or

qualify what was there said. But it is fairly obvious that our present line of thought has brought before us another aim that cannot be lost sight of. In the light of the facts that have been mentioned it will be apparent that a teacher will be very remiss in his work if he does not attempt to lay hold of the truth in the lesson, and try to impress it on the mind. These truths are a class, and the most important class, of what we earlier called the "facts" of the lesson, and these we cannot ignore. We ought to adorn in our teaching, not only the ideals, but also the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The double object which a teacher has in view is, first, to inspire Christian ideals, and second, to teach the truth.

How then are the great principles of our faith to be taught? How are these high truths to be transformed into practical convictions? How are they to be taught so that our instruction may result, not in mere information about religion, but in belief in God? How are the eternal facts to be presented to the children so that the truth may become a potent force in their lives?

The methods that are best adapted to our purpose will vary to some extent with the age of the children, and also with the character of the truth that we happen to have on hand. There are several principles, however, that may be laid down, all of which will be found serviceable in this task of inspiring belief.

1. It is worth putting in the forefront this law, that conviction is strengthened simply by the assured suggestion of the truth. There is an

element of truth in the popular idea that the best teacher is the best man. If we are in the happy position of being able to state our belief with unwavering assurance we shall seldom state it in vain. An indispensable item in the equipment that we need for teaching the truth to others is a firm personal grasp of the great facts of life. We must ourselves know that God is our Father, that He hears prayer, that He forgives sins, that He calls us to service in the Kingdom of Christ, and that He has a place prepared for us in the Kingdom that is to come. We teach these things to the children chiefly by assured reiteration of the truth. However paradoxical it may seem, the less we reason with children about fundamentals the more we are likely to be believed. The power of suggestion may sometimes be exaggerated, but there can be little doubt that it is the chief means at our disposal in imparting an effective knowledge of the articles of our faith to a child.

It is important to observe that the use of this method involves a great deal more than the weary repetition of the truth in abstract terms. With a little imagination we can express almost every religious idea in imagery that will make it more intelligible and more interesting to the mind of the child. The parable of the prodigal son was a vivid and picturesque expression of the fact that God is our Father. The same idea could be expressed in a very brief sentence, but a teacher can go beyond the bald statement of the idea, and embody it in a picture, as Christ did, putting the truth in the language of imagery that the mind can

easily grasp. This use of imagery for the purpose of giving expression to great ideas will come up for consideration later, and need not further detain us now.

2. Another method of strengthening conviction must be mentioned. Sometimes the fact that is most prominent in the lesson is a practical moral truth, rather than a religious idea in the strict sense of the word. We may find a rule of conduct plainly suggested. For example, in reading the story of Ananias and Sapphira we would have very peculiar mental vision indeed if we did not see that the great fact taught in the lesson is the importance of truthfulness. Now truthfulness is a law of conduct. It is a piece of morality. It is a rule of life rather than a religious principle. Yet no one I think will deny that it is of the greatest importance that children should early come to a right appreciation of this rule, and other similar laws of Christian morality. How then is the moral of such a passage to be impressed? When we bear in mind that a rule of conduct is just a good example "generalised," it will be apparent that the methods we may use to commend the rule will not differ from those we may adopt in commending an example or ideal. We can bring together examples, we can indicate consequences, and we can apply the lesson in such ways as imagination may suggest.

3. A third method of confirming belief is to reduce the difficulties that may be involved in it. This method, as has already been hinted, is one that ought only to be called into service in the

senior classes, where the problems of belief must be seriously faced. From the age of fourteen children begin to use their reasoning powers in real earnest. They ask questions, they raise objections, they present difficulties, sometimes beyond a teacher's power to solve.

Every new generation is perplexed, for example, to know why there are no miracles now, why God does not evangelise the world Himself, why the good suffer with the bad, where Cain got his wife, and who made the devil. These, and other thought-provoking questions, every teacher will have put to him at some time or other. Some of these cannot be very satisfactorily answered; we may admit that, even to the class. It is better to confess inability, rather than to camouflage ignorance behind a screen of words. At the same time we cannot too carefully avoid giving the impression that religious truth is simply a sum of irrational, and incomprehensible beliefs. If we are prepared to do a little thinking for ourselves we can usually give a reason for the faith that is in us, a reason that will be satisfactory to all who have any seriousness of purpose, and who are anxious to know the truth. We shall do the youths and maidens a great service if we can confirm their faith in the great verities, in spite of questionings and passing phases of doubt.

I wish to mention two or three facts that may be of help to those who are called upon to attempt this task.

(a) It is worth remembering, to begin with, that truth is confirmed by being related to other

truth. A difficult doctrine is like a waterlogged vessel, inclined to sink in a sea of doubt. But if it can be brought into connection with other truths of a simpler character it will more readily be sustained by the mind. In particular, if this truth can be shown to be a reasonable consequence of some more familiar principle, the mind will have no hesitation about receiving it as true. We find examples of this method of teaching in the New Testament. The Master on one occasion wished to impress upon His hearers the truth that God gives good things to those that ask Him. How did He proceed? He appealed to another truth. He fell back on the familiar fact that a father is always willing to provide what is best for his child, and then from this fact He "deduced" the practical consequence that God, who is the Father of all of us, will similarly give good things to those who ask Him.

Skill in teaching thus very often consists in finding familiar and accepted principles that contain and imply the doctrine we wish to teach. Henry Drummond in his book, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," makes a striking and elaborate use of this method. He aims at confirming faith by showing that many of the moral and spiritual beliefs that Christians accept are just particular applications of great familiar principles that run through all creation. Truth ratifies truth; the laws in one sphere confirm those in another. So far then as we are able to base our teaching on broad, credible principles we shall strengthen the hold that Christian beliefs have on the mind.

(b) Further, teachers, in the interests of truth, will do well not to raise difficulties unnecessarily; and when they must be raised, to avoid giving them any more emphasis than is absolutely required. Our teaching should be positive rather than negative. We should give our strength to illustrating and enforcing the truth, rather than to the refuting of error. If a man has an argumentative mind, and is expert at knocking down opponents, there is a grave danger of his falling into the mistake of the boy who, when teaching his parrot to talk, kept telling it what it ought not to say. Needless to relate the consequences were anything but desirable. It may be necessary occasionally to make reference to difficulties that are likely to be troubling the minds of some of our children, but such references should be passing and casual. It is better to take objections in one's stride so as to avoid investing them with an importance that they do not deserve.

(c) We shall help young people to believe, if we reduce our essential creed to the smallest possible limits. It is not the length of a man's creed that counts; it is its depth, and the intensity of faith with which it is held. I do not mean of course that teachers should proceed to throw overboard a considerable portion of the faith they have received. Their belief may in every item be true, and important, and well worth handing on. But I am quite certain that it is not *all* equally important, and probably large sections of it are not vital to the saving of the soul. It will make mightily for the establishing of young hearts in the faith

of Christ if a teacher can say to them, when they come to him with their hard questions, "I am not sure that I am able to give you an answer to these questions that will be satisfactory to you. I do not believe that we shall ever be able to solve all the mysteries that surround us. We are not in this world to master problems but to be mastered ourselves by the Spirit of Christ."

When young people are absorbed and perhaps worried by things of secondary importance, let us by all means try to satisfy their minds. But above all let us try to help them to see things in their true proportion, and confront their souls with the challenge of Christ as the one all important question for every boy and girl. We simply multiply stumbling-blocks when we multiply unnecessarily the conditions of discipleship. If we can enable the children to grasp with personal conviction the great simple central facts of our faith, we may rest satisfied that we have laid the only foundation requisite for a Christian life. If we can lead them to a real belief in the Christlikeness of God, and to an acceptance of His will as the law of their lives, we may be quite sure that His Spirit will in due time lead them into all truth.

CHAPTER VI.

CURIOSITY AND INTEREST.

THIS subject is really a preliminary study of some of the methods of securing attention. This is often the great problem of the Sunday School teacher. He finds it most difficult at times to arrest the minds of the boys and girls, and concentrate them upon his own subject. It is no less often, I may say, the problem of the minister. It is a disconcerting thing for the preacher during a service to observe eyes growing heavy, and heads dropping forward in slow but sure degrees, until the minds which ought to be alert are lost in peaceful slumbers. The task of a teacher, however, is not so often that of diverting drowsiness, as of capturing the over-restless, and energetic minds of the young.

There are, of course, many circumstances which are helpful to the teacher in this matter. A cheerful expression, an alert mind, a pleasing voice, and the art of skilful questioning are all factors that make for increased attentiveness on the part of the children. There are, however,

special means by which a teacher may deliberately aim at laying hold of the wandering minds of his class, and focussing them upon the theme which he has prepared for them. I wish briefly to explain two of these methods, and to indicate how, and when they may be used.

First, it is of great assistance, to the teacher if he can at the outset, or indeed at any point during the lesson, excite the curiosity of those whom he is trying to teach. Curiosity secures attention, and attention once secured can be retained. Curiosity is an instinct, an inborn disposition in all normal children. It is a hunger to know. Everything novel that comes within the horizon of a child's mind commands its attention. The child naturally and inevitably wants to know all about it. Everyone knows how painfully eager the inquisitive disposition can sometimes be. The questions of the children are endless :

"What is that, aunty?" asked a little boy, who was travelling with his spinster aunt in a railway carriage, pointing to a haystack. "Oh, that is hay, child." "What is it made of?" "Hay is dried grass." "Who makes the grass?" "God, my child." "Does He makes it in the day-time or at night?" "Both by day and by night, child." "On Sundays as well." "Yes, always." "Isn't it wrong to make hay on Sundays, aunty?" "Oh, I don't know. Do be still, I am tired." The conversation usually ends at this point in some such brusque fashion.

I would like to say at the outset that this instinct is an invaluable faculty in the child's life.

If he is successfully to deal with the different objects of life as they confront him, he must first of all understand them. Nature has implanted this instinct for good and wise ends. The mother whose boy displays mere apathy in the presence of new circumstances will surely be greatly distressed and concerned for the future of her child. No doubt this instinct may become morbid, just as every other instinct may, but in itself it is a normal and healthy part of the equipment with which we all begin the journey of life.

Perhaps you have heard of the little girl whose father wished to teach her obedience. With great ceremony he set a covered dish in the centre of the table, and leaving the child alone, he warned her that she was not on any account to raise the lid. Her curiosity was naturally roused, and as the minutes passed, it increased and took possession of her. What harm, she thought, could there be in lifting that lid. She soon found herself beside the table, her hand on the lid. She raised it just the tiniest little bit, when, to her horror, a mouse jumped out, and made good its escape. Her curiosity was too much for her sense of obedience. It needed restraint in certain directions. In itself, however, the instinct was inevitable, and could have been turned to good account.

Indeed it may be said without exaggeration that curiosity has been the spring and source of nearly all the wonderful and invaluable discoveries that men have made. Scientific enquiry is just well directed curiosity. It was curiosity that

lured Columbus across the Atlantic. He sought information. He desired to know if there was really a new land beyond the ocean. It was curiosity that led Stanley through Africa. It was curiosity that nerved Shackleton for his remarkable adventures in the Antarctic, where he faced the grim elemental forces of nature, just in order to secure knowledge of the undiscovered.

This deep human instinct is one which the teacher may sometimes be able to turn to good account. The fact to bear in mind at this point is, that if you can rouse curiosity you have secured attention. Let us see then, in what way a teacher may, with good results, make use of this disposition. In arousing curiosity the method a teacher uses is always essentially the same, and is simple. His plan might be expressed in the words, *Make your Meaning for the Moment Mysterious*. The children will take it on trust that there is some meaning to be discovered. Their curiosity will be excited and attention will be won.

Some time ago I attended a lecture in Belfast City Hall. The subject of the lecture was Housing. I was greatly interested, incidentally, in a little piece of technical strategy, which the lecturer made use of, for the purpose of concentrating attention upon an intricate fact. He introduced the subject in this way:

"The crux," said he, "of the whole Housing problem is just this, that . . . $C=2W$ ": and he set out the equation on the blackboard.

This cryptic formula called us all to attention. The wiseacres nodded their heads in assent,

the more unsophisticated of us began to think hard. The brief parade of mystery had roused curiosity, and with this brain storm in motion the lecturer had no difficulty in explaining his meaning; the substance of which was that the cost a man will bear, as a rule, in building a house, is equal to about twice his annual wage. If it is going to cost him more than that he will hesitate, on the reasonable enough plea that discomfort is preferable to hopeless debt. In order to secure attention for this bit of economic theory, the speaker was for a moment enigmatic. For a moment he was mysterious in order that in the end he might the better enlighten. He hid his meaning in the first instance that ultimately he might more easily bring it home.

Now there are several ways in which a teacher occasionally may resort to this same strategy.

First, a diagram, for example, if exhibited before it is interpreted, will inevitably call forth from a class some curiosity as to its meaning. It is a symbol of the truth of the lesson, but it is a very vague symbol. Its purport is not obvious. Let me use an illustration. I remember making use of a very ancient figure when attempting to throw light upon that question in the Catechism, "How many persons are there in the Godhead." I proceeded in this way. "Men think of God in different ways. They think of Him sometimes as the all-comprehending Being who controls all things. He is the one in whom we live and move and have our being. He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the Omnipotent

Ineffable Power who is fulfilling His will through all creation. That is how men think of God the Father. Let us represent that aspect of the truth in this way :



But again, when we read the story of Christ we think of Him as divine. He was the son of God ; He was the unique revelation ; " God was in Christ." That revelation men call God the Son. Let us represent that aspect of the truth in this way :



But again, men believe that God works in still another way in men's hearts. He reveals Himself there. He can be in us by HIS SPIRIT. Let us represent that truth in this way :



" There is a three-fold manifestation, but only one God."

This diagram did not, perhaps, make the mystery more simple, but at any rate it secured attention for a brief exposition of the facts. Any diagram that expresses even vaguely and imperfectly the truth of the lesson will serve this purpose

of eliciting curiosity and capturing the thought. You will observe, however, that it is essential that the diagram should faithfully embody the truth you wish to teach. It is well also to remember that the mere symbol should not be dallied with too long. When you have aroused the inquisitive disposition do not weary it, but move quickly on to the fuller truth.

Another way in which the same principle may be used is by calling in the aid of a picture. A teacher on one occasion hit upon a very successful way of introducing the lesson for Temperance Sunday. She cut out of the advertisements in a magazine two contrasted pictures which, when set side by side, suggested the lesson she had to teach. One was the picture of a young man, gaily dressed, evidently in the best of good spirits, and just in the act of raising a glass of wine to his lips. The other showed a busy street with the figure of another young man in the foreground, dishevelled, unkempt, without a collar, and obviously in an advanced state of intoxication. She told her class that she had brought her lesson in pictures, and that she wanted them to guess what it was. It was an admirable way of introducing her subject. It was all represented in the contrasted pictures, but it was not obvious to the children at first sight. Their curiosity was roused by the puzzle, and was thus easily guided to the subject for the day.

A model, again, of any object referred to in the lesson may be used in the same way. Its uniqueness makes it an immediate source of in-

teresting enquiry, and there is thus a concentration of thought effected which may be guided to the closely related theme appointed for the day.

Still another and more familiar way of making use of the same strategy is by telling a parable, the interpretation of which is held back for the moment. This is the method that we find frequently employed by the Master Himself. The Master embodied great truth in parables, and sometimes the meaning was not disclosed until, prompted by curiosity, the disciples pressed Him to reveal to them the meaning of His words.

Still another, and simpler, method that may sometimes be used is to express the truth of the lesson in some brief, arresting, but cryptic remark. A teacher might, *e.g.*, begin a lesson on the Unjust Stewart by such a remark as, "An ill deed may be well done." The result can easily be understood. The pithy paradox for the moment merely astounds; it excites curiosity; and the minds of pupils will wait for the interpretation. Needless to say this last is not a method that can be used frequently in the same lesson. Children's minds very soon weary of hard things.

To sum up then this statement of how the instinct of curiosity can be called into the service of the teacher, let me say that the secret of the whole procedure is to begin by an artificial hiding of the truth, in order that when it is fully disclosed it may be better appreciated, and more fully understood. If you would arouse curiosity do not display all your goods in the window at the outset, where they may be seen at a glance.

Reveal the truth in forms, that half reveal and half conceal.

This stimulating of curiosity is only one among several methods which the wise teacher will adopt for securing attention. It may not always be possible to make use of it. The lesson may not lend itself to suggestive illustrations of this kind. There is, however, another method which the efficient teacher may always use, and which indeed is the greatest secret of winning the ears and the hearts of the boys and girls. Let us turn for a moment to consider it.

To understand this main method of interesting children it is only necessary to mention the fact, that children inhabit a unique universe of their own. To some extent perhaps their thoughts are our thoughts, but very often their pleasures are not our pleasures, and their interests are not our interests. The boy has a realm of interests of his own. The girl in the same way has a circle of interests that occupy just her and her kind.

Now if in the course of a lesson a teacher is able to lead the minds of his pupils to think of objects that are naturally interesting to them, he will have no difficulty in persuading them to follow his line of thought with attention. If, for example, in a class of boys a teacher finds occasion to make any reference to the habits of wild animals, or the customs of North American Indians, or the mechanism of a motor-car, he will find the whole class alert and eager to hear. Why is this? Because these things form part of the world of every boy's interests, that is, he is in-

terested in these things from the outset. All that has to be done to secure his attention is to mention them.

Now the manner in which a teacher can usefully make such references is, *to find his illustrations in the child's world*. Such illustrations of the truth of the lesson serve a double purpose; they both interest and instruct. The worth of good temper, for example, may be better taught to a class of boys by means of an illustration picked up at their football match, than by the citing of some remote historical incident. An account was given in the newspaper the other day of a mother cat which ventured back into a burning building several times to rescue her young. An illustration of that kind will more readily command the attention and impress the hearts of a class of children than even famous stories from the lives of queens and kings. In a word, as far as possible draw the material for your lesson on Sunday, from those fields of interest that delight the children during the rest of the week. By the aid of your imagination live in their world as you prepare to speak to them about the things of God. The teacher of children must above all others learn the art of finding, "Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."

You have probably all seen a well-known picture which represents our Lord speaking to the people by the seaside. He is seated upon the bow of a boat, and the multitude is gathered around His feet. The children are there in the forefront,

and as He speaks they gaze in wonder and evident delight, marvelling, with their elders, at the gracious words that proceed from His mouth. As the teacher of to-day looks at that picture, his thought is, "would that I could teach like that." It may at times be difficult to secure interesting material to illuminate the truth and impress the ideals suggested by the lesson, but the occasion is worthy of your best, and your best will never fail.

CHAPTER VII.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

OBJECTS that are obscure in their nature will always be found on examination to resemble in some degree objects that are familiar enough. The soul, for example, is a very mysterious entity. The inquiries of all the world's wise men have not made altogether intelligible the strange qualities and powers of the soul. There are depths in its nature that we cannot fathom. Yet there are respects in which the soul resembles objects that are familiar to all. It is impressionable, *e.g.*, and in that respect it is akin in its nature to a tablet of wax. It can receive impressions and retain them, so that they are available for use at a later date, just as wax receives and retains the traceries made upon it by the style of the scribe. Or again, people who are uninitiated into the mysteries of modern science find it rather difficult to grasp the idea of etherial vibrations by means of which wireless messages can be transmitted from one end of the earth to the other. But these vibra-

tions may be compared with perfect accuracy to the radiating waves made in a pond when a stone is dropped into the water. In many respects the waves in the water resemble the electrical waves sent out by a wireless station.

Now this correspondence between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between the known and the unknown, is the bridge over which the mind most easily passes to new fields of information. The most effective way in which to bring home to the mind of a child the nature of an object which is obscure is to present to him, first of all, a familiar object that resembles in some important respect the object that is more difficult and remote. When we identify these two in the mind of the child by assuring him that they resemble each other, we help him to understand to some extent the character of the object that was obscure. Its association with the familiar object makes clear in some respects the nature of what was before mysterious. There was sound educational method in the explanation of the telephone that is said to have been given by one negro to another. "S'ppose, said he, a great big dog, so big that he reaches from New York to San Francisco." "Oh, but," said his incredulous friend, "there never was such a dog." "I know," replied the other, "but s'ppose there was. And s'ppose when you pulled his tail in New York he were to bark in San Francisco, that would be a telephone." He had unconsciously adopted the approved educational plan. He made the *familiar* a bridge to the *unfamiliar*, for a telephone resembles a dog in this

respect at least that if you operate it at one end it will produce results at the other.

Illustrations that serve this purpose of explanation may be classed under several heads:—

(1) Material objects, along with which we may class models, may sometimes be used as illustrations. Occasionally the lesson will contain a reference to some object in common use in ancient civilisation, but which is quite unknown to the children of the present day. Sackcloth, for example, is a word that occurs fairly often in Scripture, and which all children have heard used repeatedly, yet many of them have probably little idea of what it means. A sample of the material produced in the class will throw light on the word and make its meaning plain. The sample is, in effect, an illustration. A fragment of unleavened bread, if one can get hold of it, will in the same way illuminate that unfamiliar word.

It may be admitted that information of this kind is in itself of no great moral or spiritual value, but indirectly it serves a useful purpose in making the Scriptures more intelligible to the child. It is surely unfortunate when children are allowed to retain the most grotesque notions about the articles mentioned in the stories of the Bible. A class of children was being examined not long ago on the story of David and Goliath, and a boy was asked what was meant by "mail." He replied quite confidently that "mail" was yellow stuff that his mother fed the hens with. One wonders what sort of conception he had of a coat of mail!

It is sometimes possible to obtain little models

of objects that are referred to in Scripture, and these can be used as tangible, visible illustrations of things that are not familiar to the present-day child. One must not, however, over-estimate the worth of the information that can be conveyed in this way. A teacher may sometimes be tempted to spend so much of the hour in explaining the nature of the objects, customs, and institutions that are referred to in the lesson that he has little time left in which to deal with the great spiritual facts that are associated with these things.

Pictures, again, so far as we can legitimately make use of them in the Sunday School, may be regarded as of the nature of illustrations. They appeal to the mind through the eye; and truth that comes to us through that gate is more impressive, more easily understood, and more easily retained, than truth that comes to us in any other way. I have seen a picture of Abraham making his covenant with God that was just as calculated to reveal the inner significance of that act as the most skilful interpretation. Such a picture throws light on the story, and is therefore in the strictest etymological sense of the word an illustration.

Occasionally one comes across a copy of a great allegorical picture which may be turned to good account. In the Melbourne Art Gallery there is to be found a famous three-panel picture called "The Pioneer." The first panel represents a young couple taking up their abode amid the tall pines of a frontier farm. There is unspeakable wistfulness, however, in the sad eyes of the young wife, as the silence and loneliness of

the wilderness take hold of her soul. In the second picture the clearing is a little wider. A home has been built, and in the foreground the pioneer can be seen resting on a tree which he has just felled, while in front of him stands the young wife, a tiny baby in her arms. In the third picture the man is alone. He is bending over a little cross that marks the spot that will for ever be sacred to the memory of her who had dared the wilds with him, and who had been a willing martyr to the indomitable pioneering spirit of mankind. Such a picture as that tells a story, it preaches a truth, it portrays the spirit that has given us not only civilisation but that has built the kingdom of God. I can imagine a very effective use being made of it to bring home the lesson of such a life-story as that of John the Baptist, or Stephen, or that of Christ himself. The picture represents in an allegorical way the spirit that wrought in the pioneers of faith, and thus may be used to throw light on the records of their lives.

(2) But serviceable as such material illustrations sometimes are, the teacher must for the most part rely on verbal illustrations for his explanations of the truth. The principle which will abundantly justify his frequent appeal to illustrations of this kind is that already mentioned, that the unfamiliar can only be understood in the light of the familiar that in some way resembles it. The great examples of illustrations of this sort are to be found in the parables of our Lord. They are just descriptions of familiar facts, used by Him to throw light on great subjects that were not

always rightly apprehended. As has often been said, they were earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. The great realities of faith that were so apparent and certain to His own mind were not always so apparent to the dull-hearted, dim-visioned men of his day.

The Kingdom of God, for instance, is a conception at which worldly-minded men are not likely to arrive of themselves without much mis-giving and error. It is not accessible to the outward eye. And the method which the great teacher continually used to bring the people of His day to a true knowledge of the Kingdom was the method of the parable. The preciousness of the Kingdom, to the man who finds it, is like treasure hid in a field. "He goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." In its manner of development, secret, silent, and from within, it is like the mustard seed: "which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

The character of the King of the Kingdom, again, is a subject on which thoughtless people do not readily come to a knowledge of the truth. We cannot say to the enquirer, "Come, and with your eyes you shall see the King." He is a God that hideth himself. Our Lord in speaking to the people on this great theme had recourse to the same method of illustration. He drew the picture of an earthly father, tried, disappointed, broken-hearted, and yet compassionate and ready to for-

give. He made use of the story of a prodigal son. He took what was familiar, and taught the people to see in it the image of what was unseen; and thereby that which was unseen became to some extent better known.

The supreme law of the Kingdom, Christian love, is, in the same way, an ideal which can be easily misunderstood. There were many in our Lord's day who read out of it a permission of hatred towards the greater portion of mankind. In elucidating this law, Christ again had recourse to parables. He pictured the good Samaritan befriending the unfortunate, maltreated traveller, and he identified that practical sympathy with love, the supreme law of the Kingdom of God. There, He said, in that serviceable friendship you have the law of love. A familiar act was made a stepping stone to a better knowledge of a truth that was obscure, and somewhat remote.

The parables then are simply illustrations of the Kingdom of God, or of spiritual facts associated with the Kingdom. And this fact suggests the important consideration that in dealing with a parable it is desirable to focus the attention on the central, spiritual truth which the parable was intended to teach, rather than on the details of the story, many of which, perhaps, have no special significance at all. The details in the parables were added often, merely to give colour and atmosphere to the story, rather than to lend fulness to the spiritual truth.

A great deal of ingenuity has been expended in finding a spiritual meaning in all the varied

details of the story of the good Samaritan. It has been suggested that the good Samaritan represents Christ; that the wounded man is humanity; that the inn is the Church, and that the two pence represent the two sacraments. All this is interesting and ingenious, but it is entirely fanciful, and if attention is diverted to these extraneous fancies, the children are likely to lose sight of the great practical truth that the parable was intended to teach. It is surely a wiser policy for the teacher to lay firm hold on the central lesson of the parable, and by further illustrations, anecdotes, and parables of his own, to impress it on the minds of his class, until it is not only intellectually understood, but heartily believed.

There are one or two practical observations that are worth making before we leave this subject.

(a) If a teacher wishes to have illustrations for his Sunday lesson it is necessary that he should read over the lesson portion early in the preceding week. This should be done, not for the purpose of making any detailed study of the lesson at that point, but merely to discover one or two of the central facts in it. Around these points of interest the lesson will turn, and if a teacher has these in his mind during the week, illustrations will come to him without any great effort on his part. The truth in his mind will attract to itself illustrative material as he goes about his everyday vocation, and towards the end of the week all he will have to do will be to arrange the material that has come to hand.

(b) I would suggest that one or two magazines

should be read with a view to finding material for illustrations. In particular I would commend the *Children's Newspaper* to any who may not yet be familiar with that racy and interesting publication. Teachers will find in it a wonderful fund of information that may be used in Sunday School work. I need hardly add that all expositions of the lesson are worthy of careful perusal.

(c) As far as possible the facts and incidents that we use as illustrations should in themselves be interesting to young people, and should be drawn from the world of simple interests in which they live. As an example of what I mean I may take an illustration that was recently used at a Sunday School conference. The speaker was striving to make it clear that spiritual experiences differ in different individuals. Men do not all get into the Kingdom in the same way. "The varieties of religious experience through which young people come into the Kingdom of God may," he said, "be compared to the different ways boys have of getting into the water when they go to the beach to bathe. Some of them prance in as light-heartedly and unconcerned as if it were their native element. Others, with strong purpose, but with little glee in their hearts, march deliberately in through the shallow waters, until they find a depth at which they can swim. Others, again, more fearful, and with little relish for the sting of the waves, get a little way in and then fly back in alarm; try it again and get a little further, and so keep rushing out and in, until they also find themselves at home in the depths.

A few unhappy individuals, timorous beyond all reason, shiver on the beach until some strong-willed masterful individual, with little refinement of feeling, comes along and seizes them bodily and throws them in. A number of this class take the brusque treatment very well, and are glad to find themselves in the water, even though they were forcibly tumbled in. With a number, however, the masterful method produces the very opposite result. They become water shy. Wild horses would not drag them near it again." These things are a parable. It will be admitted, I think, that the illustration makes use of symbolism that is in itself interesting to boys. It thus serves a double purpose; it throws light on important differences in character, and on the consequent differences which the appeal of the Gospel is likely to make in each case; and in addition, it secures attention.

I should like to add that teachers need not be discouraged if at first they find it difficult to get apt, and interesting illustrations for the lesson. It is an art that improves wonderfully with practice. If we accustom ourselves to allow our imagination to range freely over our own experience, and if we are on the look-out for appropriate material in our off moments during the week, we shall soon acquire facility in selecting from the multitude of events just the elements that will serve our purpose. Our task is, not to teach everything that might be taught from the lesson, but to concentrate on the great truths about God and the great ideals for life, and by illustration to explain them and commend them to the mind of the child.

CHAPTER VIII.

IMAGINATION.

IMAGINATION is a strange gift. It is responsible for a great variety of results. In a person with a timid nature, imagination, with very little to work upon, can conjure up a wonderful amount of terror. Such a person in the darkness of the night can hear in every creak the footsteps of a burglar, and see in every shadow the outline of a ghost. In the hypochondriac it can manufacture all sorts of ills, with very little provocation. And, if all reports be true, it can eliminate ills as well. It can create mirth, and just as easily, if people are not careful, it can multiply their misery. It was said of Carlyle that, "Small discomforts were exaggerated by his imagination till they actually became the monsters which his fancy represented." Carlyle, unfortunately, has not been the only individual who could make mountains of trouble out of the molehills of actual fact.

Perhaps imagination reaches the maximum of its power in the lives of children. It is their great

standby when they are hard put to it for something to do. It is their never failing friend in all their amusements. A little girl, with two or three dolls as a background for fancy to work on, can, without effort, rear up around her the whole appointments and machinery of a well ordered school. She can visualise rows of pupils, tell them stories, teach them grammar, prompt the dullards, and stand the offenders out in the corner, and do it all with the earnestness and solemnity of a little mistress. The boys will turn chairs upside down, and have no difficulty in seeing in them fully equipped Dreadnoughts, which will ram each other, with nearly as much fury and noise as an actual naval engagement.

I wonder if you have ever heard of Tom Sawyers. He put his imagination, we are told, to a wonderfully practical use. On a bright summer morning Tom was set the task of whitewashing a wooden fence, 30 feet long, and 9 feet high. The work was long and hateful but it had to be done, and Tom, to vary the monotony of it, resolved to pretend that it was play. The device worked like a charm. "Like it?" said he to the boys when they came along, "Why shouldn't I like it. It is not every day a fellow has a chance to whitewash a fence, and there is not one in a thousand who can do it right." Excited by his enthusiasm, one after another of the boys bribed Tom to let them have a try. The work went on at a great pace. By the evening the fence had had three coats of limewash, and Tom, for the privilege of letting others do the work, had 12 marbles, a

Jewish harp, a knife handle, a glass bottle stopper, and numerous other small properties.

If imagination does not always take that practical turn, we all know that it has a large part to play in the lives of children. Happily the faculty does not always disappear with the years of childhood. Associated with the mature powers of manhood, it has been the source of some wonderful creations that have served for the edification and amusement of men.

We all know, for example, that the great poets were men of imaginative genius, and their works that delight and instruct us were wholly the creation of their gifted imaginations. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a series of magnificent images, splendid pictures, the creation of his fancy, by means of which he gave us his interpretation of the story of the temptation and fall of man. Shakespeare's dramas are almost entirely the creations of his unrivalled fancy. It is true that some of them have an historical basis. The poet possessed an old chronicle which recited in a bald prosaic way the leading facts of the history of a previous generation. The story was the barest outline. He took these facts and let his imagination play round them until the names became characters that lived, and moved and spoke and acted before him. He reincarnated in his mind's eye the old stories and they became his immortal dramas of life.

But the example of the possibilities of a talented imagination with which we are perhaps most familiar is found in the works of Bunyan, particularly in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. The unique

gift which was given to him, and which he consecrated to his Master's use, was his imagination. The way of salvation became, for his consecrated vision, a veritable highway, with its turnpikes, hills, valleys, bypaths, treacherous morasses, frowning cliffs, hospitable inns, vanity fair, and "the country of Beulah whose air was ever sweet and pleasant, where the pilgrim heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear on the earth." Abstract virtues were transformed for Bunyan to helpful friends and companions by the way. Temptations became the lions, robbers, and giants of the story. Little wonder that he was an effective preacher in his day. Someone ventured to remark to Richard Baxter that he wondered that anyone could listen to the preaching of such an uncultured man. "Sir," said the old Puritan divine, "Could I preach like that evangelist I would gladly forgo all my scholarship and all the learning I possess."

To what use can a teacher put this gift of imagination? How may he turn it to good account for the fortifying and sanctifying of the lives of the children? The principal fact to be borne in mind is, *abstract truth when visualised becomes impressive reality*. Abstractions are never as interesting as concrete fact. They do not impress the mind with the same force. They are not retained in the memory with the same ease. They do not influence conduct to the same extent. An abstract of a subject is like the dry bones of it, and dry bones are never very fascinating objects. Here is a figure of man "in the abstract." He is

not a very captivating person. I have no doubt that any artist with a little imagination could transform this individual, and make of him something more worthy of our interest and consideration.



Now the value of an imagination lies just in this, that it can take dry bones, and breathe upon them and make them live. Shakespeare took the dry bones of history and brooded over them, and they came together as with the breath of life. Milton took the mere skeleton of facts depicted in Scripture, and let the light of his imagination play upon them, and there was created his splendid epic. Bunyan took the framework of Christian truth, dry bones to many people, and he made them live. And the value of his work just lies in the fact, that what lives and moves and breathes is always far more interesting, and more impressive, than dry bones can ever be.

Now the use that can be made of imagination by the teacher does not differ in character from that which has just been described. He can perform these miracles of reincarnation too. He can, for example, by means of it recreate, first:—*the facts of the lesson*.

Sometimes the description of events given us in Scripture is full and explicit. Sometimes however, it is a mere abstract of what took place.

Sometimes whole chapters of history are condensed in a single sentence or a single phrase. One obvious use to which a teacher can put his imagination is to take this abstract of history, and, putting himself in the midst of the events described, try to see them for himself so that he may be able to describe and interpret them to the children.

Here is a stirring chapter of history all packed into a single verse. "And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred, four score and five thousand, and when the Israelites arose in the morning behold they were all dead men." Now in rehearsing such an event to the children something may surely be legitimately done in the way of expanding the story and supplying the probable details. Readers will recall Byron's recapitulation of the facts:

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold.
His cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea
When the blue waves roll nightly on dark Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green
That host with their banners at sunset was seen.
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn has blown
That host on the morrow lies withered and strown."

There is nothing unreal or false in this imaginative amplification of the story. No fictitious details are added. But the picture is given in larger dimensions, and is far more realistic and impressive. Children will naturally and properly accept such an extension of the story as essentially the truth, but if there is any fear of being misunderstood, we can easily keep ourselves right with them

by introducing our elaboration with an explanatory phrase, such as, e.g., "We can imagine that it happened in this way," or "Very probably this is what occurred." The main fact is that very often we can put our imagination to a high use by giving colour and lifelikeness to the facts of Scripture, so that they become full of meaning and interest for the young.

Then there are *our own stories and illustrations* of Christian life and Christian conduct. Some imagination is essential for the effective use of these. I have already suggested that these illustrations form the most important part of all the material that we bring with us to our class. But the worth of an illustration depends largely on the skill with which it is put. A good story in the hands of a man with a vivid and consecrated imagination, is like an arrow in the hands of a mighty man. It finds its way to the hidden depths of the soul. A teacher, e.g., wishes to use an event from his own experience. He witnessed, let us suppose, on one occasion a farewell between a father and son, as the boy left home for the first time. It was an impressive scene and one which will illustrate the subject for the day. How is he going to use it? He must first get back amongst the events, and revisualise them all. He must take time to recall the home, the father, the son, and to summon up again the hopes and anxieties and fears that found expression at that moment of farewell. If he can picture to himself the events, he will have little difficulty in presenting them in an orderly and impressive way to the class. It

is well to remember that a skeleton story never captivates the heart.

Then there is *the darker aspect of the truth*, to which a brief reference has already been made. The experiences of life discover to us not only the heroism and graciousness of Christian character, but also the tragedies and tears of transgressors. Should we speak of these to the children? It is necessary to express oneself guardedly on this question. I believe we make a great mistake if we take the darker side of truth to be our message. The teacher should guard against transforming his class room into a chamber of horrors. We should depend chiefly on the constraining influence of love; on the captivating power of what is noble and good. Nevertheless I am quite certain that the other side of the picture should occasionally be shown. We are surely not going beyond our duty in tracing out now and then the results of sin, that its real character may be known. There is no need to dwell on the methods of sin, still less on its alluring glamour. But it may be our duty to point out the fateful, pathetic, tragic consequences that follow it.

I believe that there are in this life things to be feared, as well as things to be loved, and the greatest kindness we can show to a child is to teach him to fear and hate these things. I do not know how a teacher is going to do his duty on Temperance Sunday, unless he is prepared to take a sample of the pathetic truth, and present it in all its tragic details to his class. This can only be truthfully and adequately done by a man who has to some

extent cultivated his imagination, and is able to recapture and piece together the varied experiences of the past.

Nevertheless, this use of the imagination should, for various good reasons, be only occasionally called into service. The advocate of the kingdom of Christ must rely for his chief appeal on the winning power of the face of Christ, on the appeal which righteousness, truth, and love inevitably make to the human heart. An old philosopher puts the truth very well from his point of view in these words. "He who desires to assist other people in common conversation will avoid referring to the vices of men, and will take care to speak sparingly only of human impotence, while he will talk largely of human virtue, and power, and of the way by which they may be made perfect so that men may be moved, not by fear or aversion, but by the effect of joy, and may endeavour as much as they can to live under the rule of reason."

Then again, imagination must necessarily be of large service in *suggesting the practical applications of the lesson*. Unless we are able with some degree of reality, to call up before our imagination the events and experiences of children's lives, unless we are able to put ourselves in their place, we shall not be able to suggest to them the occasions on which they should put into practice the ideals we have presented to them. Only sympathetic imagination will disclose to us the possibilities of Christian conduct in their lives, and if we can suggest these possibilities we make it a great deal easier for the child to follow Christ.

Without this pointing of the moral, children are apt to miss altogether the meaning of the truth. A class of children were once told the story of the impudent camel that was invited by the simple tailor to put its nose into his tent. According to the legend the camel soon found excuses for getting his whole body in, until there was no room at all left for the poor tailor. The story lends itself to an obvious enough application, but when the children were asked what lesson they were to learn from the story, one boy volunteered the opinion, that they were to learn to be kind to animals. This rather remote deduction was very far from the application that the teacher intended to make. If children are to grasp the significance of even the simplest story, it must be applied to their lives, and this can best be done by the person who can call to his aid the services of a lively imagination. To all who are interested in the religious education of the young I would re-echo the opinion of Henry Ward Beecher. In one of his lectures to students he says, "The first element on which your preaching will largely depend for power and success, you will perhaps be surprised to learn, is imagination, which I regard as the most important of all the elements that go to make the preacher." So far as the value of this gift is concerned, the work of preaching and that of teaching are the same.

CHAPTER IX.

AIDS TO ATTENTION.

IT has been well said that the line of attention follows the line of interest. If two men were to walk together through a valley, one of them a botanist, and the other a geologist, we may be quite sure that each would be interested in altogether different features of nature. The geologist would be attracted by the spurs of rock jutting out here and there, and he would try to read from them the geological history of the locality. The attention of the other would be absorbed by the different varieties of sedges and grasses by the river's brink, or perhaps by some tiny pimpernel that was unusual in the district. Their chief interests would determine in each case their line of attention. The eye sees, not only what it brings with it the power to see, but also what it is interested to see.

Now as has been already observed, children have their own leading interests too, but unfortunately for teachers, it cannot be said that either religious truth or Christian ideals is a subject to

which they are naturally drawn. One of the problems which a teacher has to face is, that the mind of a child is very easily diverted from the serious topics arising out of the lesson.

There are circumstances in which it would be quite impossible to secure attention. I have a distinct recollection of a congregation of young people that were sadly distracted by the presence of a robin in the church during the service. The little creature was evidently ill at ease in his strange environment, and kept swooping to and fro from perch to perch. I need hardly say that the little visitor was an object of unusual interest to the boys and girls, and even the brightest of sermons could hardly have won their attention, when competing with such an interest. I am afraid the efforts of the preacher were largely lost that day. Such a peculiarly untoward circumstance is only occasional, but it illustrates the general principle that the line of attention follows the line of interest, and it incidently reminds us of the fact that the interests of children are not always identical with the interests of those who wish to edify them.

The indispensable condition however of effective teaching is just the ability to command attention, and it must be one of the first objects of a teacher to control the whole circumstances and environment of his class, as well as the material of his lesson, so as to be able to retain the minds of the boys and girls. It is sad prodigality of effort for a teacher to prepare his lesson if, when the hour for instruction comes, he cannot focus the attention of his class upon it.

Charles Wagner, in one of his books, tells us of a little incident which occurred on one occasion when he was making the ascent of one of the great peaks of Switzerland. On a little plateau half way up the mountain, from which one could get a grand idea of the solemn splendour and glory of the Alps, he came upon a little group of tourists all intent on a game of cards. He pushed on to the summit, and later in the day, when descending again, he came upon the same company still playing cards. It was surely unfortunate for those men, that amid the glories of creation, they had eyes only for paltry things. It is equally unfortunate if, when we are trying to present to the children the great wonders of God, and His salvation, we should not be able to detach their minds from frivolous things, and enable them to see the truth that would inspire their souls.

The circumstances that are of most importance in securing attention may be grouped under four heads.

(1) There is the general environment in which the class meets. We have seen that there are circumstances in which it is almost impossible to secure attention. Irritating distractions may make it exceedingly difficult for a teacher to hold the thoughts of his class. One of the first duties therefore of a superintendent should be to reduce distractions in the school room to a minimum. He should consider it within his province to see that the school is properly ventilated and heated, and that the children are made as comfortable as possible. We need not expect a boy to be attentive

and well behaved, if he has to sit for an hour with the sun blazing into his eyes, and perhaps with only half a chair to support him. It is essential to good discipline that each class should be so arranged, that every child will be under the direct observation of the teacher. Under this head we may also point out, that it does not make for good attention to have various school officials perambulating around, when the lesson is being taught, and if I may suggest it, I would recommend that the minister, when he visits the school, should do so either at the beginning or end of the hour. In addition each teacher should endeavour to make himself as little of a nuisance as possible to his next door neighbour. If he is so unhappy as to be gifted with a loud raucous voice, he will be doing a service to the whole school if he cultivates the art of speaking softly. Lively youths are apt to be more interested in the echoes that reach them from the next class than they are in the words of their own teacher.

(2) The second important circumstance in securing attention is the temper of the children themselves. They can assist the teacher, or they can quietly resist his efforts to secure their ears. It is worth reflecting for a moment, on the frame of mind that we should encourage in the members of our class. It is pointed out in all books on psychology that there are two kinds of attention. First, there is spontaneous or involuntary attention, such attention as a boy might give to an object that is peculiarly interesting in itself. When a wasp, for example, invades the class room, every child

gives the intruder all his thought; his attention is spontaneous or involuntary. Second, as distinct from this, there is voluntary attention, the attention which one gives to a subject that is not particularly interesting, but which one is determined to investigate. As an example, I may mention an incident that occurred in a Y.M.C.A. hut during the war. A number of soldiers were listening to a rather prosy lecture on an antiquarian subject. There was a little restlessness in the audience, and the speaker, thinking to get rid of those uninterested, suggested that if any wished to do so, they could retire. But his audience had learned endurance. No one moved; one man, however, responded by calling out, "Go on, old fellow, we can stick it." The subject was not fascinating, but they were prepared to make an effort to hear him through. Now a teacher has a right to expect that his children will to some extent give him attention of this kind. He should use all his ingenuity to make his subject attractive, but all the effort should not be on his side. The golden rule here is, secure the goodwill of your class. If we have great good nature, and have secured respect and goodwill, our lesson material may sometimes be stodgy enough, but the children will do their best "to stick it."

(3) The third factor, and one of still greater importance, is our method of teaching. The environment may be ideal, and the children may not be ill disposed, but if our method of handling our material, is artless, and chaotic, we can hardly expect them to keep company with us all the way.

Under this head a great variety of principles might be discussed, but a brief mention of one or two must suffice.

(a) A teacher should take pains to launch his lesson well. Experts speak of this launching of the lesson as "the preparation stage." The phrase calls attention to the necessity of preparing the mind of the child for the lesson we are about to teach. This ought to be done, as a rule, before the lesson portion is read. Suppose a teacher has to present to his class the story of the call of Moses. He can prepare their minds, by harking back, in a question or two, to the lesson of the preceding Sunday. These questions call up a portion of the story that is already familiar to the children, and in that way their minds are adjusted to the lesson of the day. A certain expectancy is created, that will make the reading of the portion more interesting, and more intelligible to every child.

The preparatory remarks may, of course, take various other forms. We may for example, give a brief account of the call of some other individual, which will be analogous to the call of Moses, and which will thus put the children in a better position for appreciating the lesson for the day. We might tell them about the call of General Booth, as he worked in his early days in the East End of London, and when he seemed to hear a voice saying to him continually, "Here is a sphere; here is a sphere." If we can secure the attention at the outset, we shall be more likely to hold our class to the end.

(b) Our material for illuminating the lesson

should be marshalled in an orderly way. We should have some idea of the points of interest that we shall dwell on, and of the truths and ideals that we shall endeavour to get home. I hope I shall not frighten any teacher if I say that in making the preliminary arrangement of our material, we would do well to use a slip of paper, jotting down in the proper order, words and phrases that will suggest to us the points we wish to make.

(c) We should make a considerable use of the old Socratic method of question and answer. Young people obtain a better grasp of the subject if we can lead them to the truth by question and answer. The question should be put first of all to the class as a whole, and children should be taught to raise their hands if they are prepared to answer. It should then be put directly to some particular pupil. In that way the minds of the whole class are kept alert.

(4) The last factor that governs the amount of attention a teacher will secure is the amount of interest that he himself has in the lesson. If we are alive and full of our subject, we shall waken a responsive interest in the mind of the child. A teacher inevitably brings with him that mysterious, potential thing called an "atmosphere," and if the atmosphere is one of enthusiastic interest in the lesson for the day, his words are not likely to fall on deaf ears.

On more than one occasion I have gone to Musical Competitions, partly for the purpose of hearing the comments of the experts who acted as adjudicators. In every case I was impressed with

the supreme importance which they attached to atmosphere. It was more vital to the correct interpretation of a song than accuracy in either time or tune. Without it, the gayest song was drab and dull. The same principle can be applied to the instructing of the young. We must maintain the correct atmosphere. If we are out of tune with our subject, it is vain to look for attention from others. It is said that a popular preacher once asked the famous actor, Garrick, how it was that such crowds flocked to hear him, whilst so few went to the House of God. His reply was very striking. Said he " You present facts as if they were fiction ; I present fiction as if it were fact." It was the atmosphere in each case which made the difference.

CHAPTER X.

MEMORY AND HOW TO IMPRESS IT.

HALLOWED memories are a means of grace. We all bring with us from the past pictures which are a joy and an inspiration. There are the images of early home life which often become for us ideals in the formation of our own plans. There are the memories of impressive incidents with which we were associated, and which have profoundly affected our whole outlook. The recollection of them is an influence still. And yet again there are the truths which we have received from the lips of our teachers, and the fragments of Scripture and verses of hymns in which these truths were expressed; these also go to make up the gracious inheritance which we have received from the past, and which does so much to hold us to that which is best to-day.

My purpose is to point out the methods by which a teacher can best make his pupils possessed of mental pictures and practical truths, which will remain with them, and influence their lives. How

shall he present the lesson that it may be remembered?

For our purpose at the moment it will be convenient and permissible to work with a very simple if somewhat imperfect conception of a child's mind.

It is possible to look upon the mind of a child as a blank piece of paper, and to consider it as our business in the Sunday School to inscribe facts upon it so indelibly that the recollection of them will not easily vanish away. Or, to use a different metaphor, we may for the moment regard the pupil as an animated gramophone, into whose sensitive mechanism we may utter our carefully selected messages, that he may be able to reproduce them at appropriate times. Our desire that is, may be simply to impart information in such a way that our pupils may be able to recall it.

Now, while I do not regard the making of impressions of this sort as the chief work of the Sunday School teacher, still it is a worthy *part* of his task. It is not his chief business to drill his scholars in the facts of Scripture, but this might surely form an incidental feature of his work. It is not the main end of the Sunday School to secure the memorising of a number of Psalms and hymns, and a certain amount of the Catechism, but all this may properly be undertaken as desirable means to the fulfilment of the great purpose of the school. How may this be done?

In considering this, it must always be remembered that a good deal will depend on the native

capacity of the child. There is a vast difference in the retentiveness of the memories of individuals. Some men's memories for facts have been prodigious; even phenomenal. There have been individuals, for example, who could recall the character of the weather and how they were employed on any particular day, for as many as forty years back. Lord Macaulay, it is said, picked up a little poem at a railway station and read it over. Years afterwards, as a result of this single perusal, he was able to repeat it without a mistake. It is not, however, with phenomenal genius of that kind that the average teacher has to deal.

To enable your children to remember easily facts which it is useful for them to know, I would make the following suggestions: First, *make them interesting*. Facts that are interesting command attention, and that which receives attention is likely to be remembered. A novel method of approaching the lesson, for example, excites that curiosity which we have just considered, and imparts a new interest to the facts.

The main method, however, of making Scriptural facts interesting is to fill out the details of the picture by the aid of a little historical imagination. The ancient historians condensed the truth. Their pictures are generally only outlines; their stories, brief synopses. You will aid the children in remembering these facts if you fill out the context, and make the picture live in all its warmth and colour, before their eyes. A child will remember the facts of Robinson Crusoe far more

easily, if the whole story be told to him, than if he be given merely a succinct epitome of the events, such as you might find in the table of contents at the beginning of the book.

Secondly, *unify the facts*. The mind is far more likely to retain information that has been unified than disconnected details. It is almost impossible to remember, or at any rate to recall, a series of disconnected ideas. The great law governing all our powers of memory is the law of association. Events that were associated together in their occurrence will be recalled together. Things that were seen together will be reproduced together by the mind. They formed part of an original unity, and the one inevitably suggests the other. The law might be generally expressed in this way, things that are associated together in any form of unity suggest each other, and are therefore more easily recalled. It may not be possible for the teacher to make any extensive use of this principle, but one or two applications may be suggested.

If a teacher wishes a child to remember the principal events in the life of some Bible character, he will help the child in his memory work, if he shows how these events developed, the later growing naturally out of the events and experiences of earlier years. By this process he unifies the different events, and the recollection of one recalls the other. Again, in the memorising of a Psalm or a hymn, assistance may sometimes be given by pointing out the sequence of ideas that runs through the verses. This sequence is a unifying

factor, and the ideas thus connected suggest and recall each other.

A teacher may sometimes make use of this same principle in the arrangement of the stories and illustrations which he hopes to present to the class. By inventing associative links between one topic and the next, he unifies his material, and thus is able to recall it at the proper moment more easily.

Thirdly, *reiterate*. Facts that have been reiterated and revised, again and again, are more likely to be remembered. This is the principle that is chiefly relied upon in the Primary and Junior Departments. Children learn by rote, and it is remarkable how things that have been learned in that way in the earliest years will be retained to old age. We have all heard aged people reciting, with evident appreciation and delight, long poems or hymns that they had been taught in their childhood. "Learn young, learn fair," is an encouraging maxim for a teacher of Primary scholars.

CHAPTER XI.

HABIT.

HABIT is the root of perversity. It is also the secret of proficiency in any sphere of life. Walking in the country recently, I was witness to a little incident that gave me food for quite a long series of reflections. A lady cantering gaily on a handsome hunter came to a place where three roads met. It was her wish evidently to take the fork to the right, but her mount was just as evidently prejudiced in favour of the road to the left. She pulled violently at the rein, but though the horse's head yielded somewhat to her wish, his legs kept carrying her towards the left. She made him gyrate a couple of times and tried him again, but he was still obsessed with his own notion. He had, in fact, to be steered a considerable distance tail first, before he could be persuaded to accommodate his rider in her wish. His obstinacy was the result of habit. He had been accustomed at that point to turn to the left, and his whole physiological constitution rebelled against taking the other turn.

It is not difficult to find in human conduct tendencies very analogous to that. Any person who has attempted to teach children to sing will have no difficulty in recalling instances of what I mean. If in putting children over a piece of music for the first time a false step be made, it will be discovered that, however carefully they be warned against the mistake, many of them will fall into it a second time. If, unfortunately, the mistake be not observed until the piece has been sung several times, it will only be with the greatest difficulty that we shall be able to correct it. The children who are feeblest in their notation, when they come to the perilous point, will inevitably produce the wrong tone in spite of all our thunderous vociferations to keep them right. They have formed a habit, and their vocal chords, like the horse's legs, persist in moving the wrong way.

We might define habit as a permanent disposition of the will resulting from the experiences of the past, or, more briefly, as acquired disposition. When a man acts in any fashion an abiding impression seems to be made in the constitution of his nature. In consequence of that impression, the man finds it easier to do the act a second time. It is as if his first act had beaten out a path for him, and on the second occasion his will finds the beaten path to be the track of least resistance. The elemental facts in the situation may be put in a very simple way. Every act is the result of some "stimulus," to use the technical term. It is the result of some event, or circumstance, or sensation that has impressed us. The law of habit

declares that when a stimulus has resulted in a particular act, the same stimulus, if repeated, will be likely to reproduce the same act; and if the stimulus and the act are thus continually associated for any length of time, a confirmed habit will be formed.

As habits play such a large part in human life, it is well worth our while to understand a little more clearly how they are formed, and how they may be changed. Our description of the process will be simpler if we allow ourselves for the moment to speak in terms of our physical nature, which is the counterpart of our spiritual being. Suppose in the course of conversation a tart remark is made to me. The meaning of the unpleasant observation is immediately conveyed through my ear to the brain. If I am of a hasty temperament, this message immediately wakens my instinct of retaliation, and this in turn sends off, through my volitional nerves and faculty of speech, a retort just as sharp as the remark I have heard. Now that response of mine has made a definite impression upon my mind, making it easier for me on any subsequent occasion to retaliate in the same disagreeable way. If I for any length of time allow myself in this way to be the victim of my instinct of pugnacity, I shall very soon find that I have developed a very snappy temper indeed. Like Nabal of old, I should have become, by force of habit, such a son of Belial, that a man hardly dare speak to me. Every act has strengthened this explosive tendency. A particular and unfortunate channel has been dug deep in my mental

constitution, so that on the slightest provocation my volition flies off in hasty words and hasty acts. Thus a habit is made, and habit is character, and character is destiny.

There is, however, another aspect of the truth about habit, which is equally important to keep in mind. A habit after all is only a tendency, not a fixed and unalterable part of our nature. It has been strengthened, as we have just seen, by thoughtless acts. By finer and worthier acts, deliberately chosen under the inspiration of higher powers, the unfortunate disposition can be made to vanish away. Let us give this side of the truth also a concrete expression. Suppose that I, when I have been irritated, happen to be under the influence of some great personality who despises and condemns all foolish and irritating wrath. In that case, notwithstanding a strong tendency to retaliation springing out of the old disposition, I may compel myself to act in a different way, and give the soft answer that turneth away wrath. It would be untrue to say that by that one act I had absolutely obliterated the old evil tendency, but I have at any rate weakened it. In accordance with the same law that strengthened the wrong tendency, I shall discover that by the better act a tendency in another direction is being created in my nature. Indeed if I am loyal to my ideal I shall find in time that the old disposition has completely faded away, and that a new and nobler tendency has taken its place. It is very interesting and instructive, in the light of this undoubted psychological fact, to recall the words in which

Paul describes his sanctification. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Professor William James, who did so much to popularise these important facts, has based upon them several practical principles, which will be interesting to all who are concerned with the education of the young. First, he points out that a man ought to make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as he can. The meaning of this principle is that so far as possible we ought to reduce to systematic routine the necessary details of every day's work. It is a commonplace observation that method multiplies power; and the explanation of the truth is to be found in the fact, that the methodical man has by the law of habit thrown upon the mechanism of his nature a great many of the details of his work, and his higher deliberative faculties are thus set free for greater tasks. As James says, "There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual. . . . Full half the time of such a man goes to the deciding of matters which ought to be so ingrained in him as practically not to exist for his consciousness at all." This duty of method may seem to be only indirectly connected with morals and religion, but it is none the less important for the man who would do good work in the service of the King. It is surely a maxim worth passing on occasionally to the boys.

Further, in the formation of a new habit James lays emphasis on the importance of en-

thusiastic determination at the start. We must launch ourselves upon the new course "with as strong and decided an initiative as possible." It may be mentioned in passing that this is one of the facts which may be urged in favour of a public profession of faith. Men may differ as to when and how such a profession should be made, but there can be little question that a man is helped in his stand for righteousness by being definitely and publicly committed to the cause of Christ. Dr. Grenfell of Labrador fame, in an interesting account of his own religious experience, adds these words, "I am an absolute believer in boys making a definite decision to follow Christ, and that in the hands of a really keen Christian man the right of confirmation is very valuable." It will be understood that the right of confirmation to which he refers is in one respect very similar to a public profession.

A further maxim on which no emphasis needs to be laid is that he who would form a useful habit must never permit himself to lose a battle, and to this he adds a final rule that every resolution made should be acted on as soon and as often as possible.

These practical principles are all so familiar to those who are engaged in the work of religious instruction that any amplification of them would be superfluous here. I cannot relinquish this subject, however, without calling attention to the fact that, while theoretical information about the laws of habit has its place, this information by itself is not likely to make a profound influence on any

person's mind. It is part of the truth, and valuable truth at that, but it is not the truth that renews the heart and makes men free. The psychology of habit is a poor substitute for the Evangel of Christ. And thus we are brought back to our original first principle, that the chief task of the teacher is to take the things of Christ, and show them to the children.

There is a vast deal of Christian truth behind that familiar phrase, "The expulsive power of a new affection." It is that affection which is the beginning and the end of Christian discipleship. It is that which effectually constrains men to choose the better and reject the worse. It is that which enables them to break with the old and hold to the new. It is that which mightily redirects the volitions of the soul, so that they shall make, not for the gratification and strengthening of the evil dispositions of the past, but for the renewing of the whole man after the image of Christ. In a former sentence we imperfectly quoted the words of the apostle about sanctification. We cannot conclude this chapter better than by quoting him in full: "Therefore if any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILD AND THE CHURCH.

DR. JOHN CAIRNS once, in a controversy about the nature of the Church, made a statement which may interest teachers. He said, "Whenever I see a young man teaching the Gospel to half a dozen children, I recognise a living branch of the Church of Christ." Now there is a point of view from which that is true. The task of the teacher in its ultimate purpose is similar to that of the Church. His purpose is to win hearts for Christ. In a sense his class is a living branch of the true Church.

But this is not the whole truth. It does not bring into focus that part of the teacher's work which I have at present in mind, and I wish teachers for a moment to look at their work from a slightly different angle. The Sunday School is subordinate to the Church. It is an auxiliary to it. The Christian character that is being formed there is meant to express itself through the Church for the world. A teacher ought, therefore, to recognise that he is educating his boys and girls,

not only for the great business of life, but for membership in the Church within which they will best be able to serve the world. There their talents may be put to the highest use. There their influence will be most felt.

It is well that we should realise the tremendous influence that Christian fellowship within the Church has upon the individual. President Wilson, when he visited this country at the end of 1919, made a pilgrimage to Carlisle to see the Church where his grandfather had been minister. In addressing the congregation which had come together to welcome him, he made a very impressive reference to the power of the Church in the lives of men. He said, "It is in quiet places like this all over the world that the forces accumulate that presently will overbear any attempt to accomplish evil upon a great scale." Power is born within men as they worship together. Their ideals are likely to be purer and saner when they are shaped in the house of the Lord. Devotion is likely to be deeper and most lasting when it is kindled in fellowship with others, and effort for the Kingdom of God will almost certainly be more constant and more determined when it is sustained by the sympathy and co-operation of kindred spirits.

Wesley, as his manner was, put the truth well when he said, "If we want to serve God and get to Heaven we must either find friends or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." A single faggot, well lighted, may burn a good while, but a pile of such faggots will make

a fire that can hardly be put out. A single magnet will retain its virtue a long time, but a number of such magnets placed together will retain their magnetic properties permanently. The Spirit of Christ may not always quite perish in the soul of the man who persists in walking alone, but that Spirit is more likely to grow and more likely to be of service to the world if he finds congenial company on the way of life. The complete ideal for our boys and girls is that of discipleship within the Church. Our work is not complete unless it has led them there. There is need for anxiety about the youth or maiden who has not found a Church home.

It is often said that great numbers of the children of our Sunday Schools do not find their way into the membership of the Christian Church. Indeed, it has been alleged that in England while 80 per cent. of the children go to Sunday School, less than 20 per cent. afterwards become members of the Church. This may be an over-statement, but unless rumour is very misleading indeed, there is a sad leakage between the Sunday School and the Church. What means may be taken to incline our young people towards the Church? How may we encourage in them sympathy, with its worship and its work? Let me make one or two suggestions.

First, we shall do our children a great service if we set ourselves with thought and patience to cultivate the spirit of worship in the Sunday School. The light of the glory of God that bringeth salvation may dawn upon men's hearts

in many ways, and it is as likely to come to them in the quiet of prayer or in the uplift of praise as in the reading and exposition of His Word. It is in waiting upon God that men renew their strength. It is by looking to Him, rather than by hearing about Him, that they find salvation, and it is in prayer and praise more than when receiving instruction, that the soul turns to God, and knows His presence and feels His power and responds to His love.

I think we are seizing one of our greatest opportunities when we give serious thought to the worship in the Sunday School, and when we succeed in inspiring it with reverence and faith. Psalms and hymns ought to be selected that will appeal to the children, and when unfamiliar hymns are chosen the line of thought ought to be briefly explained by the superintendent. This would not only enable the children to enter more heartily into the singing, but would also obviate the danger of those grotesque interpretations which the children sometimes put upon the words when they are left to pick up the sense for themselves. It would probably be an improvement to have two brief singings at the opening of the school. The prayers as a rule should be premeditated and they should be brief, concrete, and devout, with all eyes closed and all heads bowed. Those who have been taught to worship in sincerity and in truth in the Sunday School will be more likely afterwards to find themselves at home in the house of God.

I once knew a simple man to whom God came

in a strange way. His master, a devout lonely old man, was in the habit of kneeling every night in silent devotion before retiring to bed. The boy knelt in silence with him. We can only guess what thoughts took shape in his mind, what deep longing rose up within him, as he knelt in the silence, but the boy, speaking of his religious experience afterwards, said, "I got it then and it never left me." If we can by intelligent, pre-meditated, impressive worship in the Sunday School, lead our children to the very presence of God, the desire for Him may never leave them, and they will love His house because in its worship they readily find Him again.

Further, it goes without saying that the teachers should encourage attendance at Church. I need not urge the power or value of habit, important though that is. I shall put the matter on higher grounds. In nearly every Church now the minister has a word for the children. If he be a man who has learned the happy art of talking to children about things in which they are interested, without feeling self-conscious and awkward, it would be difficult to over-estimate the impressiveness of the truth he brings to bear upon them amid the reverence and quiet of the house of God.

If a digression be permissible I could tell of a sermon that bore fruit in a rather strange way. I had spoken of grafting pears on thorns, roses on briars, industry on indolence, grace on nature, and other feasible monstrosities of that kind. A few years afterwards I received a box of pears,

with an explanation to say that they had been grown on a thorn on which a successful application had been made of one point at least in the sermon.

Children become interested in the portion of the service that is intended for them, and the messages of life and salvation come to them with double force as they wait with their parents in the place of prayer. If you have not attempted a League of Church Loyalty or a Union of Young Worshipers in your Church, it is an organisation about which it would be worth your while to make enquiries.

Further, in the senior classes instruction should incidentally be given from time to time about the nature of the Church and its various activities. The children should be given a modern intelligible, democratic conception of it.

The purposes for which Christian people organise themselves into Church groups are of an intangible, impalpable character, and if young people do not have the various activities of the Church indicated to them, and appraised at their true worth, it is not to be wondered at if occasionally they grow up with the idea that the only work of ministers, office-bearers, and people is to keep a certain amount of inherited ecclesiastical machinery in motion. The Church belongs to the ministers, they think, and the ministers are maintained for the conservation and performance of a few respectable but ill-understood conventions and forms. The educational work, the evangelistic work in the widest sense of the term, the various

philanthropic, social, and missionary activities of the Church should be casually but clearly pointed out to young people, and they should be made to understand that all this service is the work and responsibility of the Christian people who compose the Church, and that the ministers and office-bearers are simply the officials whom these people have appointed to direct the work on their behalf. The glory of the Church is the glory of its work, but if that work is neither seen nor understood we cannot expect that the organisation will be appreciated at its true worth.

I should like to have said something about two other means that may be used to incline and equip our young people for Christian co-operation within the Church, but this didactic chapter is already long enough. I shall only just mention them. If we cease trying to achieve the impossible feat of "retaining our senior scholars" in the Sunday School, and encourage them rather to migrate to a big, cheery, socially important Bible Class, with a home of its own, and a capable good-natured, intelligent leader of its own, or to undertake service as teachers in the Primary or Junior departments, we shall have provided congenial spheres within which youths and maidens may complete their religious education.

Finally, the teachers of all classes in which there are children over twelve years of age should take occasion to suggest to these young people the wisdom and the duty of definitely associating themselves with Christ and His work by coming to the table of the Lord.

This step is, in the lives of the vast majority of those who take it, a solemn act of self-dedication and consecration, and it is a sad misfortune if young people ignore it simply because no friend in close touch with them would explain or commend it to them. To lead young hearts to this great decisive step in life is surely a duty that lies as much within the province of the teacher as of the minister.

In turning the attention of teachers to this subsidiary phase of their work I have not forgotten that their chief motive must always be to make disciples who will help to win the world in every domain, as in every clime, for Christ. But the disciples who will be mightiest for this end are the men who have been taught to work and pray in close co-operation with all others who love His name. It is not necessary to manufacture sectarians. It is not desirable to inspire disrespect or contempt of other Churches. But it surely is desirable that our young people should be led to love their own Church, and appreciate the greatness of its task. For many of them it may be the only means of grace. Alas! that they should disregard it. There, or nowhere, many of them will be kept in touch with the spirit of Christ. There, or nowhere, the fires within them will be kept alive. Through it, or not at all, many of them will pull their full weight for the triumph of the Spirit of Christ throughout the world. We shall greatly serve them if we can equip them to work with Christ, through the Church, for the world.

CHAPTER XIII.

FINDING TEACHERS.

THE one essential of an efficient Sunday School is efficient teachers. Other factors are important; this is all important. Other aids are valuable; this is indispensable.

One of the first schools in England for ragged children was founded by a poor cobbler, John Pounds, of Portsmouth, whose humble home afforded few advantages for Kindergarten work. But he had a singular love for children, and mothers in the neighbourhood, encouraged by the welcome which he invariably gave to their little ones, soon made a habit of sending their children to him while they went to work. He saw his opportunity, and like a born teacher he set himself to teach them to read and write. His only lesson books were newspapers, bill-heads, and the Bible, but he had genius that was inexhaustible.

It is said that during his life, no less than one thousand children crossed his threshold, and he helped them all. It was a picture of this primitive, but efficient educationalist which inspired in the mind of the famous Dr. Guthrie, of Edinburgh, the idea of his ragged schools. This simple Portsmouth cobbler had had no training, he had no school equipment, but he was a capable teacher for all that.

It is not every congregation that provides genius of that sort. A Church must do its best with such material as comes to hand, and to compensate for this lack of native educational genius, a congregation should endeavour to educate such talent as it has. It may possess a fine building, and hosts of children, maps and models, and may have its school graded on the most approved system, but if it has not efficient teachers it cannot do good work. I wish to make one or two suggestions which may help ministers and superintendents to secure these indispensable leaders of the young.

(1) It is of considerable service from this point of view to possess a small library, especially intended for teachers, and stocked with two or three dozen up-to-date volumes dealing with all departments of Sunday School work, and welfare work amongst the young. The establishment of such a library will cost little, and the perusal of even two or three of the books will multiply tremendously the power for Christian work of those who read them. Charlotte Brontë, after reading one of Ruskin's books, exclaimed, "That book has

given me eyes." I have little doubt, that if we encourage our young teachers to read a good book on their craft, many of those who are labouring blindly in the dark will say, "That book has given me eyes."

(2) Of late years it has been discovered that the Primary Department of the School can be used as a training ground for future teachers. The conditions that are indispensable for reorganising the Department on modern lines are, first, that it should have a room to itself, and second, that it should be under the leadership of a capable teacher, who is interested in educational methods as well as in the children themselves. I have seen the scheme in operation in a large Infant Department of some two hundred children, and it is worked somewhat in this fashion. As the children come in, they group themselves in little classes of four or six, each class facing towards the platform, and all in charge of youthful teachers, who have been selected from the senior school. The session is opened by the leader, who goes through the usual items of the service order—welcome, hymn, prayer, birthday exercise, nature talk, cradle roll exercise, offertory march. The younger teachers then take up the work, and tell the story to the children, using what skill they have to impress the truth of the lesson. After ten or fifteen minutes spent in this way, Expression time follows, and then the Leader closes the Session with suitable devotional exercises.*

* See *The Primary Department*. By Ethel Archibald Johnston (N.S.S.Union).

There are obvious advantages of having the Infant Department organised in this way. These junior teachers, who serve for a year or two at this special work, have their tongues loosed. They acquire confidence and some facility in expressing themselves. During their period of training they are understood to be under the direction of the Leader, who meets with them weekly in the Training Class, and gives them talks on the lesson, and in methods of work. At the end of one year, or perhaps two years, these young people will graduate from the Department prepared to take up the work of teaching, and their place in the Primary Department will be taken by a new set, similarly selected from the upper school. We must either find teachers or make them. Most congregations will find it expedient to make them.

(3) The Bible Class might also be made to add its quota to the development of teachers. It has within its ranks some of the best material in the Church. Why might the programme not include occasionally, say every second year, half a dozen topics on work amongst the young? The leader of the class will have little difficulty in finding suitable subjects. Almost any book in the teacher's library will provide him with practically all the material he will need. I may add that this information on the religious education of the young will be of invaluable service to the members of the Bible Class, whether they ever become teachers or not. Many of them no doubt will in later years be brought into close contact

with children, and this knowledge acquired in the Bible Class will serve them well.*

A great Scotchman, Principal John Cairns, writing from his honoured home in Edinburgh to his mother in her humble shepherd's cottage, used these words, "The longer I live, the more I feel how much I owe to you, and the more do I bless God for all the good influence you have exerted over me for so many years." She had the proper method in her own simple way of reaching the heart of her child. In so far as we are able to interest our young men and women in work of this kind we shall benefit not only the Sunday School, but also the homes of future days, and the Church, and the world.

It will be fitting if I conclude this chapter with a reference to two or three of the qualities of mind and heart that are indispensable to all those who wish to guide the feet of the little children into the ways of righteousness and the paths of peace. Let me say at once that these highest qualities do not result from information about the laws of mind or the art of teaching, but are the fruit in us of daily self-discipline and personal loyalty to our Master, Christ.

We need first of all vision—vision that gets beyond a mere recollection of the past, vision that is born in us from the spirit of Christ, vision that can forecast a future for the children, that would accord with the will of Christ. We will help them better to follow in His steps if we can see in every

* See *Principles of Senior Work* (N.S.S.U., 1/- net); and *The Senior Quarterly* (Pilgrim Press, 1/- net.)

boy and girl a candidate for Heaven, a possible angel, an heir of Eternal Life. We have been told of a famous sculptor who, when he looked at the block of marble, rough and unhewn as it was, seemed to hear it shouting, "Glory, Glory." He saw in the material the lineaments of the Angel, which he was about to lay bare. And we can train ourselves to see in every boy, a valiant and resourceful Knight, who will champion in his own sphere the cause of the Kingdom of God. And these high visions will come to us, just in proportion as we keep in daily touch with Him who has made the children for Himself.

(2) We need good nature. Henry Ward Beecher said, that if a preacher had good nature he could say anything to people; if he had not good nature he could say almost nothing. The same principle holds good of all who teach the young. We need geniality, cheerfulness, and even a little humour will be by no means out of place. Children, it is said, seldom like teachers who cannot smile. There are some whom we may well regard as the special favourites of nature in this respect. Their advent to any company is like a burst of sunshine. Silence, suspicion and all the ill-humours of darkness fly away. We ought to cultivate the happy optimism of these favoured souls; it will make us peculiarly welcome to a Sunday School class.

(3) Above all, we need reverence which is just that assurance of spiritual realities which constrains a man at times to stand in awe. We need this, particularly in the senior classes if our

words are to carry weight. The ideals and the worthy desires which have been inspired in young hearts by enthusiastic teachers, will of themselves exercise a healthy influence on a child's life. But as the boy grows to manhood, and the maiden to womanhood the only power that will confirm their choice of the right path is an assurance of a Divine Presence, a living loving Christ in the world, who has marked out the path and asks us to follow. Ideals will only possess commanding authority when they are felt to be ideals of the Eternal God. Holy desires can only imperiously direct the soul, when they are known to be the desires for us of the Lord of all. The crowning gift therefore, that we can bestow upon those whom we teach is faith, and they will find that the best assurance we can give them of the reality of the objects of faith is the evidence of reverence in our own souls. An acceptable teacher must not be unyielding in his solemnity, but he must ever manifest reverence, in the presence of holy things. A reclaimed outcast once said to the lady, who had helped her to a better life, "Of all the qualities I love in you, there is none that I love so much as your heroic feeling of devotion." Children as well as adults can interpret the meaning of that heroic feeling of the pilgrim soul.

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